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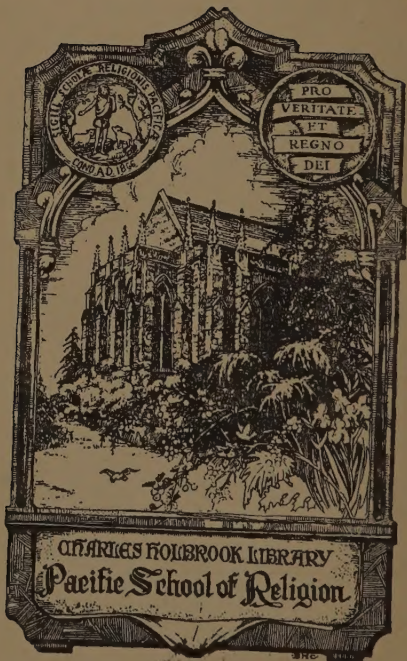
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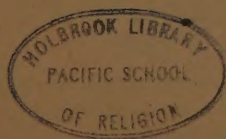
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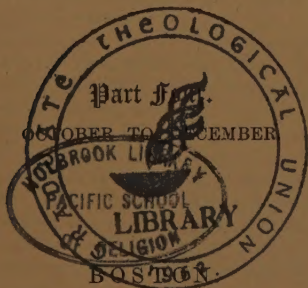




Congregational Publishing Society
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NOTES
ON THE
INTERNATIONAL S. S. LESSONS
FOR 1883.

BY
REV. R. R. MEREDITH, D.D.



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GENERAL INTRODUCTION.

THE two books of Samuel, like the two books of Kings, originally formed an undivided whole. The Septuagint translators, regarding the Book of Samuel and the Book of Kings as a complete History of the Kingdom from its foundation to its fall, divided the work into four books, which they styled *Books of the Kingdoms*.

The title Samuel does not denote authorship, but like the titles Joshua, Ruth, and Esther, commemorates the prominent actor in the events recorded in the book. Its adoption shows a true insight into the connection of the history it contains. It stands as a monument of the greatness of the Prophet who was Jehovah's instrument for establishing the kingdom of Israel, and guiding the chosen people through a crisis in its history second in importance only to the Exodus. The book begins with an account of his birth; and his direct influence extends to the close of it, in the reign of the king whom he anointed as Jehovah's choice.

A late Jewish tradition ascribes the authorship to Samuel himself. This obviously could only apply to the first twenty-four chapters of the First Book, and as the work forms a connected whole, it is improbable that these in their present form proceeded from his pen. It is generally agreed that the book is a *compilation* from different sources, but who was the compiler there is no evidence to show.

What, then, were these sources? Ingenious attempts have been made to analyze the component parts of the book. But apart from these conjectural theories, we have several indications of the sources from which the compiler drew his materials. (1) The chief sources were probably *contemporary prophetic histories*. The compiler of the Book of Chronicles expressly names as the original authority for the history of David's reign "the book of Samuel the Seer, and the book of Nathan the Prophet, and the book of Gad the Seer" (1 Chron. xxix. 29). (2) *The Chronicles of David* (1 Chron. xxvii. 24), which appear from this allusion to have been of the nature of statistical state-records, may also have been consulted. (3) *The national poetic literature* was laid under contribution (1 Sam. ii. 1-10; 2 Sam. iii. 33, 34; 2 Sam. xli. = Ps. xviii.; 2 Sam. xxiii. 1-7). (4) *Oral tradition* may perhaps have supplied some particulars, though this must be a matter of conjecture.

At what date was the compilation made? The language points to an early date. It is pure Hebrew, free from Aramaisms and late forms. Constructions which are common in the later books, *e. g.* Kings, are comparatively rare. Some time, however, had elapsed since the events

narrated in the books had occurred. The explanation of archaic terms (1 Sam. ix. 9) and reference to obsolete customs (2 Sam. xiii. 18), as well as the use of the formula "unto this day" (1 Sam. v. 5, vi. 18, xxvii. 6, xxx. 25; 2 Sam. iv. 3, vi. 8, xviii. 18) indicate this. Moreover, "no grand survey of a period and selection of its events, such as is demanded from the historian, is generally possible until the period itself has retired in some degree into the background." — *Ewald*. It must certainly have been after the death of David, since the whole length of his reign is mentioned (2 Sam. v. 5); and if the Septuagint text is correct, there are two allusions to events in the reign of Rehoboam. In 2 Sam. viii. 7 that version reads, "And Shishak, king of Egypt, took them when he came up against Jerusalem in the days of Rehoboam the son of Solomon;" and in 2 Sam. xiv. 27, "And she (Tamar) became the wife of Rehoboam the son of Solomon, and bare him Abia." But even if these additions are not accepted as part of the original text, other indications point to a date not earlier than the reign of Rehoboam. The mention of "the kings of Judah" in 1 Sam. xxvii. 6, presupposes the separation of the kingdoms. The distinction between Judah and Israel in several passages (1 Sam. xi. 8, xvii. 52, xviii. 16; 2 Sam. ii. 9, 10, iii. 10, v. 1-5, xix. 41-43, xx. 2) has been supposed to point to the same conclusion; but this cannot be pressed as evidence. The division which existed in the early part of David's reign was quite sufficient to account for it. On the other hand, there is nothing in the book which points to a later date than this; and the conclusion may be fairly arrived at that the Book of Samuel was compiled substantially in its present form soon after the Division of the Kingdoms.

The historical accuracy of the book is remarkably borne out by the internal evidence. It is not to be denied that difficulties and discrepancies exist, which it is hard, perhaps impossible, to explain or reconcile. But the forcible simplicity and grace of the narrative; the vividness with which the actors in the various events stand out before us; the minuteness of detail with regard to time and circumstance; the accurate description of places; all agree to confirm the conclusion that the greater part of the work is derived from the testimony of eye-witnesses and contemporaries, and in many cases handed down to us in their actual words. The apparent inconsistencies are in fact an evidence that the compiler faithfully embodied the authorities he consulted, instead of harmonizing them into what might have seemed a more consistent whole.

The Canonicity of the book has never been questioned. Its acceptance in the Christian Church rests upon the fact that it formed an integral part of those Jewish Scriptures which were received by our Lord and his Apostles as "given by inspiration of God, and profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." Our Lord appealed to one of the narratives contained in it as teaching the great principle that the ceremonial law must give way to the law of mercy (Matt. xii. 3, 4; Mark ii. 25, 26; Luke vi. 3, 4); the Magnificat shows evident familiarity with the song of Hannah. St. Peter, St. Stephen, and St. Paul refer to the history contained in it (Acts iii. 24, vii. 46, xiii. 20-22). — *Rev. A. F. Kirkpatrick.*

FOURTH QUARTER.

OCT. 7, 1883.]

LESSON I.

[1 SAM. 4: 10-18.

ELI'S DEATH.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"His sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not."—1 Sam. 3: 13.

TIME.—B.C. 1141. **PLACE.**—Shiloh.

LESSON-TEXT AND NOTES.

10. And the Phi-lis'tines was a very great slaughter, for fought, and Is'ra-el¹ was there fell of Is'ra-el thirty smitten, and they fled every thousand footmen. man into his tent: and there

† Ps. 78 : 60-64.

10. **The Phillistines.**—See note, Third Quarter, Lesson X. v. 21. The last mention of the Philistines (until the first verse of the chapter from which our lesson is taken) was in Judges, chaps. 13-16. In Judg. 13: 1 we read that "the Lord delivered the children of Israel into the hand of the Philistines forty years."—*Kirkpatrick*. About twenty years of the forty had now passed. Encouraged, it may be, by the return of the prophetic gift (1 Sam. 3: 21; 4: 1) or by the victory of Samson in his death, the Israelites arise and give battle to the Philistines in the pass of Beth-horon, at a place called from the victory, twenty years later, Ebenezer (*the stone of help*).—*Keil*. In the first of the three great battles which signalized this neighborhood the Israelites were defeated, with the loss of four thousand men (v. 2). The elders of Israel (v. 3) then formed the rash project of fetching the ark of the covenant into the camp, that it might save them from their enemies. Thus all their memories of God's mighty deeds of old was summed up in a superstitious hope from the mere symbol of His presence, which they profaned even while they trusted to its help. The ark was brought from Shiloh by Hophni and Phinehas (v. 4), the sons of Eli, fit ministers of such a sacrilegious act. The shout with which the ark was welcomed (v. 5) appalled the Philistines, who thought the gods of the Hebrews had come into the camp, those mighty gods "that smote the Egyptians with all the plagues in the wilderness" (v. 8). But, instead of panic fear, they assumed the courage of despair (v. 9), while the God they so much feared was only present in the Hebrew camp to punish the presumption of the rulers and the wickedness of the priests.—*Wm. Smith*. **Fled every man into his tent.**—That is, to his own home. The Israelites were utterly routed, and fled pell-mell from field and camp,—an army completely panic-stricken and demoralized.—*Terry*.

11. And the ark of God was taken;² and the two sons of E'li, Hoph'ni and Phin'e-has, were slain.

12. And there ran a man of Ben'ja-min out of the army, and came to Shi'loh the same

day with his clothes rent, and with earth³ upon his head.

13. And when he came, lo, E'li sat upon a seat by the wayside watching: for⁴ his heart trembled for the ark of God. And when the man

² Chap. 2 : 34.

³ Josh. 7 : 6 ; 2 Sam. 15 : 32 ; Job. 2 : 12.

⁴ Ps. 26 : 8.

11. **The ark of God was taken.**—Such a calamity was appalling in an age which associated the presence of God with the symbol now lost, perhaps forever. To the ignorant multitude it would doubtless seem as if, in gaining the ark, the Philistines had also secured the presence and aid of Jehovah, for this was the common idea in the ancient world. It was grievous for the tribes to have lost their God, but to find him in the hands of their enemies was a disaster of inexpressible magnitude.—*Geike*. **Hophni and Phinehas were slain.**—The "sign" given by the man of God that the whole doom pronounced against Eli's house would be executed (ch. 2 : 34). The Psalmist's account of the catastrophe should be compared, Ps. 78 : 56-64.—*Kirkpatrick*. Thus a terrible divine judgment was executed on Israel and its whole religious system, dead, as it was, and void of the presence of the living God. The priesthood was judged in its unworthy representatives ; the loss of the ark to the heathen was the sign that the living God does not bind His presence to a dead thing, and withdraws its helpfulness and blessings where covenant-faithfulness to Him is wanting ; the mighty army was destroyed because it had not the living, Almighty God as leader and protector, and He gave Israel, as a punishment of their degeneracy, into the power of the enemy.—*Erdmann*.

12. **There ran a man, etc.**—Runners who were swift of foot, and could go long distances, were important and well-known persons, and there seems to have been always professional runners to act as messengers with armies in the field.—*Cook*. The distance from Ebenezer to Shiloh was probably not more than twenty miles, so that a swift runner could easily arrive the same evening, Cp. *to-day* in v. 16.—*Kirkpatrick*. **Shiloh.**—See note, Third Quarter, Lesson xii. v. 21. **His clothes rent, and . . . earth upon his head.**—Usual signs of calamity and grief. Compare Josh. 7 : 6 ; 2 Sam. 13 : 19 ; 15 : 32.—*Terry*.

13. **Eli sat upon a seat** (or, *his seat*).—We must imagine him sitting upon his official seat by the outer gate of the tabernacle enclosure (v. 18 ; cp. 1 : 9), not by the town gate on the road by which the messenger entered, for the news does not reach Eli until after it has been published in the town (v. 14).—*Kirkpatrick*. **His heart trembled for the ark of God.**—He had a foreboding of disaster. Perhaps the ark had been taken against his judgment, he yielding with characteristic weakness. Such a use of the ark, unless authorized by God himself, as in Joshua 3 : 7, 8, was little less than a temptation of God, as it put him, in the opinion of the people, under the necessity of giving them the victory in order to save the symbol so intimately associated with his honor. It was

came into the city and told it, all the city cried out.

14. And when E'li heard the noise of the crying, he said, What *meaneth* the noise of this tumult? And the man came in hastily, and told E'li.

15. Now E'li was ninety and eight years old; and his eyes were dim, and he could not see.

16. And the man said unto

E'li, I *am* he that came out of the army, and I fled to-day out of the army. And he said, What is there done, my son?

17. And the messenger answered and said, Is'ra-el is fled before the Phi-lis'tines, and there hath been also a great slaughter among the people, and thy two sons also, Hoph'ni and Phin'e-has, are dead, and the ark⁵ of God is taken.

⁵ Chap. 2:32.

an imitation of a heathen custom (2 Sam. 5:21), and had its sources in the wickedness and superstition which distinguished the recreant people. — *Johnson*. All the city cried out. — The usual Eastern *wail* in time of calamity. — *Gray*.

14. And the man came in, etc. — If the A. V. came in is right, as it probably is, the phrase denotes that the messenger left the public street and came into the enclosure of the house of the Lord, at the gate of which Eli was sitting. But the Hebrew may be equally well rendered, simply *came*, i.e. came up to Eli. Eli had probably addressed the question, What *meaneth* the noise of this tumult? to some Priests or Levites standing around him, and they had called to the messenger to come and speak to the High Priest. — *Cook*.

15. His eyes were dim. — Eli was ninety-eight years old, and "*his eyes stood*," that is, were stiff, so that he could no more see (1 Kings 14:4). This is a description of the so-called black cataract, which generally occurs at a very great age from paralysis of the optic nerves. — *Keil*. The phrase seems to express the *fixed* state of the blind eye, which is not affected by the light. Eli's blindness, while it made him alive to sounds, prevented his seeing the rent garments and dust-besprinkled head of the messenger of bad tidings. — *Cook*.

16. I am he that came out of the army. — He says, "I am he that came" not merely on account of Eli's blindness, but also on account of the importance of the announcement with which he approaches the head of the whole people. At the same time the messenger declares himself a *fugitive*, and so intimates that the army is completely broken up. — *Erdmann*. What is there done? — Exactly the same words (in the Hebrew) as in 2 Sam. 1:4. *How went the matter*. The turn of the whole narrative there is strikingly similar to this. *My son*. — The paternal address of an old man and one in authority to a young one. (Comp. Josh. 7:19; Ruth 2:8; 3:10, 18:1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2, etc.) — *Cook*.

17. The messenger answered, etc. — The answer of the messenger to Eli's question contains nothing but *facts in a fourfold grade*, each statement more dreadful than the preceding. There is a power in these words which comes out in four sharp sentences, with blow after blow, till its force is crushing: Israel *fleeing* before the Philistines, a great *slaughter* among the people, *Eli's sons* dead, the *ark* taken. — *Erdmann*.

18. And it came to pass, when he made mention of the ark of God, that he fell from off the seat backward by the side of the gate, and his neck

brake, and he died; for he was an old man, and heavy. And he had judged Is'ra-el forty years.

18. When he made mention of the ark of God.—The ark was the symbol of the Divine presence, and its loss foreshadowed, in Eli's mind, the utter destruction of his nation and the abolishment of Jehovah's covenant with them. In Judges 18:30 this capture of the ark is called "the captivity of the land," so deeply was it, from the theocratic standpoint, identified and associated with the highest interests and holiest hopes of all Israel. And the wickedness of his sons had been largely the cause of all this woe! All these thoughts, and many more, rushed in upon his mind as the last terrible announcement fell upon his ear, and his enfeebled constitution and trembling heart could not endure the shock.—*Terry*. The clinging of the old man's heart to the ark of which he was the special guardian, as depicted here and at verse 13, is most touching, and seems to vouch for his substantial integrity as a servant of God, notwithstanding the imperfection of his conduct in the matter of his sons. If so, we may see, in the severe chastisement that befell him, a proof that he was numbered amongst the children of God. For "what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?" (comp., too, 1 Cor. 5:5, and 2 Sam. 12:11-14). **By the side of the gate.**—A comparison of 2 Sam. 18:4 explains exactly the meaning of the *side of the gate*, and Eli's position. His seat or throne, without a back, stood with the side against the jamb of the gate, leaving the passage through the gate quite clear, but placed so that every one passing through the gate must pass in front of him. **He had judged Israel forty years.**—The Sept. read *twenty years*. This chronological note connects this book with that of Judges (comp. Judg. 3:11, 30; 8:28; 10:2, 3; 12:7, 9, 11; 15:20, etc.)—*Cook*.

ANALYSIS AND EXPOSITION.

Introduction.—The Philistines, who were still the oppressors of Israel, had advanced their forces as far as Aphek, in the highlands of Benjamin, a few miles north of Jebus, or Jerusalem. Encouraged, probably, by the terrible blow inflicted on their enemy in the dying effort of Samson, and, at the same time, by the reappearance of the prophetic gift in the youthful Samuel, the Israelites went out to battle against them, and encamped at the place which afterward became so memorable by the name of Eben-ezer. In this neighborhood three great battles were fought. In the first of these the Israelites were defeated, with a loss of four thousand slain (vs. 1, 2). The issue of the second, which was still more disastrous, is given in our lesson. This battle is especially memorable for the infliction upon Eli and his sons of those judgments of which he

was warned of God through the unknown prophet (2: 27-36), and also through the child Samuel (3: 11-18).

Lesson Topics.—I. The Disastrous Battle. II. The Dismal Tidings.

I. THE DISASTROUS BATTLE (vs. 10, 11). — Alarmed at their defeat in the first battle, the elders of Israel resolved that "the Ark of the covenant of the Lord out of Shiloh" should be brought, and taken into the battle, deeming that its presence would assure victory to their side. The sacred symbol was therefore removed from the tabernacle and carried into the camp by Hophni and Phinehas, the sons of Eli, fit ministers of such a sacrilegious act. At first the Philistines were greatly alarmed at its arrival. They thought the Gods of the Hebrews had come to their assistance, and they cried, "Woe unto us! who shall deliver us out of the hands of these mighty Gods? these are the Gods that smote the Egyptians with all the plagues in the wilderness." They, however, assumed the courage of despair, and, resolving to sell their lives dear, they cried one to another, "Be strong, and quit yourselves like men, O ye Philistines, that ye be not servants unto the Hebrews, as they have been to you: quit yourselves like men, and fight" (vs. 3-9). Thus the second battle was joined. Foolish Israelites! They had forsaken God and his anger was kindled against them. They had never won a battle without his help, yet they think now that God's *Ark* will act as a charm and win them the victory. Their criminal blunder cost them dearly. The God whom the Philistines so much feared was only present in the Hebrew camp to punish the sins of the people, the presumption of the rulers, and the profligacy of the priests. "Israel was smitten, and they fled every man into his tent;" thirty thousand were slain, amongst whom were Eli's sons, Hophni and Phinehas; and the Ark of God was taken.

The steps which led to this great disaster are clearly marked in the history.

1. *The weakness of Eli.* The aged priest was a mild, kind, and generous man. As a father he was over-indulgent (3: 13). This weakness is demonstrated even by the method of his reproof (2: 22-25). Here is the beginning of all Israel's present trouble. Weak, indulgent, and neglectful fathers sow ruin for their children and sorrow for themselves. Eli's public position may have had much to do with his failure in family discipline. It was his business as judge and high priest to settle disputes, administer the government, conduct the affairs of state, and maintain the ordinances of religion. Perhaps these so engrossed his attention and energies that he neglected the proper training of his own children. Be this as it may, it is true to-day that many a man is so absorbed in public affairs, in the duties of his profession, or in the business of money-making, as to be almost a stranger to his own children, and entirely ignorant of the habits they are forming. Whatever may be its cause, whether it spring from weakness or neglect,

we may rest assured that the lack of constant, wise, and firm parental training in the family is the fruitful source of sorrow for the parents and ruin for the children. Who can picture Eli's sorrow in his profligate sons? He was "very old." His sons were old in sin. What a reflection on his discipline and example. How grievous the thought of dying, and leaving such a force of unholy life to pollute society with its baneful influence. He seeks to restrain them, but "they hearkened not unto the voice of their father" (2: 25), and Eli is reminded, as many a father has been since, that correction may come too late. Though the plastic nature of childhood might have yielded to his touch, he had now to deal with sterner material. Family discipline is too late when children are full grown and their habits formed. It should begin early, and both in the way of precept and example, of moral suasion and correction, walk side by side with growing years and forming habits.

2. *The wickedness of Eli's sons.* This stands connected in the history, on the one side with their father's weakness, and on the other with the calamity which came upon Israel. God holds Eli responsible for the sins of his sons (2: 27-36). Their wickedness was but another step toward the defeat of Israel. Hophni and Phinehas, as the majority of sons would do, grew up to take full advantage of the liberty accorded them by the indulgence or neglect of Eli. They fell to an awful depth. Though they "were sons of Belial" and "knew not the Lord" (2: 12), they had the audacity to occupy the priest's office. There are certain qualifications necessary to the right discharge of every occupation, and he is a bold man who will undertake the duty without the fitness. Criminally audacious must he be who would minister at God's altar without those spiritual qualifications which are demanded by a deeper law of necessity. These men degraded and disgraced their holy office by their covetousness (2: 13, 14). They made religion a means of personal gain, than which nothing can be meaner. They were violent and despotic (2: 16). Impatience and violence characterized their administration. Force is always the weapon of the morally imbecile. To all their other crimes they added that of adultery (2: 22). No wonder that God vindicated the sanctity of his worship by permitting disaster to come upon Israel.

3. *The degeneracy of the people.* This was in some measure the result of the wickedness of Eli's sons, and so of Eli's weakness or neglect. Neglect of discipline at the right time and in the right way is more evil and calamitous in high places than in humble — more evil in the way of example, and more calamitous because more far-reaching in the hour of disaster. The evil practices of Eli's sons caused an entire nation to slight the offerings of the Lord, and led multitudes to boldly follow their natural promptings and sin with a high hand. The conduct of Hophni and Phinehas brought contempt upon religion. Men failed to make a distinction between the wicked priests and the religion whose interests they were pretending to serve. They had their ideals of rectitude sharply defined, and, seeing the

sacrilege of the priests, they "abhorred the offering of the Lord" (2: 17). The consequent degeneracy of the people appears in their superstition—their blind reliance upon an external symbol. When they had been once defeated by the Philistines they said, "Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of Shiloh unto us, that, when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies." And when this was done, "all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth rang again" (vs. 3-5). Though their lives were loose and wicked, they felt safe because they had the presence of the ark. At other times they cared little about it, were indifferent as to its welfare; but in this hour of danger, they rallied round it as an amulet of strength, and in place of contrition before God, and humblings on account of their sin, they vaunted that the Lord was in the midst of them, and conveyed what they deemed to be the symbol of his presence with arrogant and obtrusive gladness to their camp. They learned very soon that, the commandments of God disregarded, there was in the mere presence of the ark no virtue and power of victory. It is not religiosity that saves, but spirituality. Superstitions and blind reliance on external forms has not entirely departed from among men. We need to be on our guard against it. That it is displeasing to God is demonstrated by this disaster to Israel.

II. THE DISMAL TIDINGS (vs. 12-18).—In the meantime there is expectation in the streets of Shiloh. Doubt and hope alternate. The people know that the ark has been carried forth to the camp, but though in their judgment it is a tower of strength, their defeat has greatly disheartened them. Many a wistful glance is cast toward the field whence the courier may bring the tidings of battle. In the gate of the city sits Eli, a feeble old man, with silvered hair and sightless eyes, whose ear is attent to catch the first whisper of tidings, "for his heart trembled for the ark of God." At length the tidings came. At even of the day of the battle a young man of the tribe of Benjamin, with his clothes rent and his hair sprinkled with dust, rushed into the town. A wail of lamentation instantly arose, for the people saw how the day had gone. Overhearing the noise, Eli inquired the cause, and the young man approached to tell him. Terrible are the tidings that are now to come upon the heart of that old man, like successive claps of thunder. Israel is smitten with a panic rout—here the patriot mourns; thirty thousand men are slain—here the spirit of the judge is stricken; Hophni and Phinehas are dead—here the father's heart bleeds. Terrible as all this must have been, Eli bears nobly up. Ah, but the worst of all is yet to come—"And the ark of God is taken. And it came to pass when he made mention of the ark of God"—not till then—"that he fell from off the seat backward by the side of the gate, and his neck brake, and he died."

Eli was a good man. He may have been feeble in his restraint and criminal in his indulgence of his wicked sons, but his submission to God and the grandeur of his closing scene redeem

his errors and shrine him with the good and true. His reverent submission to the Most High appears in the way he receives the message of the child Samuel (3: 18). When "Samuel told him every whit" of the awful communications from God, the aged priest bowed, saying, "It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good." The statement of these terrible truths might have aroused his indignation; why were they intrusted to a mere child, and not himself, who being older, and more experienced, and above all high priest, had a prior claim to such communications. Eli reasons not thus, but calmly says, "It is the Lord." This recognition of Divine Lordship is no easy achievement of faith. In its light the character of Eli brightens into beauty and goodness.

The manner of Eli's death disclosed his supreme concern for the Divine honor, and sheds additional light on his character. The patriot could survive the defeat of his people; the judge, though weeping sore, could be submissive under the slaughter of thirty thousand men; the father, his heart rent the while with remorseful memories, could bear up under the loss of his two sons; but the servant of God swooned away his life when deeper affliction was narrated of the disaster that had happened to "the ark of the covenant of the Lord." He reserved his highest concern for the ark of God. This type of character is needed to-day. Men who amid all the business of life, and in all its varied relationships, reserve their highest solitudes for the cause and service of their Lord. The ark of God is still in peril. There never was a period when it was carried into a fiercer battle. The enemies of Christ are numerous and powerful. But all the peril does not arise from the avowed antagonists of Christianity. As in the days of Israel, so now, the ark of God is in greater peril from its professed friends. Vainly might the Philistines have fought if the Israelites had not been untrue to God and themselves. So now there is blind reliance on form, gross inconsistency, and careless indifference on the part of many of God's professed people. These are the things that strengthen the hands of Christ's enemies, and imperil the ark of God.

OCT. 14, 1883.]

LESSON II.

[1 SAM. 7: 3-17.]

SAMUEL THE JUDGE.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Hitherto hath the Lord helped us."—Verse 12.

TIME.—B.C. 1120. **PLACE.**—Mizpeh.

LESSON-TEXT AND NOTES.

3. And Sam'u-el spake unto all the house of Is'ra-el, say-

3. And Samuel spake, etc.—Twenty years of Samuel's life had

ing, if ye do return¹ unto the Lord with all your hearts, then put² away the strange gods and Ash'ta-roth from among you, and prepare³ your

hearts unto the Lord, and serve him⁴ only: and he⁵ will deliver you out of the hand of the Phi-lis'tines.

4. Then the children of Is-

¹ Deut. 30 : 2-10 ; 1 Kings 8 : 42 ; Joel 2 : 13.

² Gen. 35 : 2 ; Josh. 24 : 14, 23.

³ 2 Chron. 30 : 19 ; Job 11 : 13, 14 ; John 4 : 24.

⁵ Isaiah 55 : 7 ; Hosea 6 : 1.

⁴ Deut. 13 : 4.

passed away since the last mention of him at ch. 4 : 1, where he was spoken of as a prophet. In this chapter he appears somewhat suddenly in the threefold character of prophet, judge, and the acknowledged leader of the whole people. **If ye do return, etc.** — These words prove decisively that a profession of repentance on the part of Israel had preceded them, since they contain Samuel's answer to such profession, the sincerity of which he puts to the proof. The profession, therefore, must be sought in the preceding words, "All the house of Israel lamented after the Lord" (v. 2). — *Cook.* **The strange gods and Ashtaroth.** — "The Baalim and the Ashtaroth" of v. 4. *Baalim* is the plural of *Baal*, *Ashtaroth* of *Ashtoreth*, and the plural denotes either (a) the numerous images of these deities, or (b) the different forms under which they were worshipped, as Baal-Peor, Baal-Berith, Baal-Zebub. Baal (=lord) was the supreme male deity of the Phœnician and Canaanite nations, and probably is to be identified with the Babylonian *Bel*. *Ashtoreth* (Gr. *Astarte*) was the corresponding female deity, worshipped in Babylonia under the name *Ishtar* as the goddess of battles and victories, in which character she also appears among the Philistines, war-spoils being dedicated to her (chap. 31 : 10). Her symbol was the *Ashêrah* (rendered "grove" in the E. V., Judg. 3 : 7 and frequently), probably a wooden column or image resembling the sacred tree of the Assyrians, the worship of which is very commonly coupled with that of Baal. The Baal-worship, which began in the wilderness, when the Israelites "joined themselves to Baal-Peor," the god of Moab, seems never to have been thoroughly eradicated during the period of the Judges. See Josh. 24 : 23 ; Judg. 2 : 11-13 ; 3 : 7 ; 8 : 33 ; 10 : 6. — *Kirkpatrick.* **Prepare your hearts unto the Lord.** — "*Fix your hearts towards or in trust in God.*" The *fix* is opposed to the wavering, vacillating state of mind, which may always co-exist with sighing and lamenting, and sets forth, as an indispensable condition, the energy of religious-moral life, with which the man who turns heartily to God must put away everything opposed to God. The "to Jehovah" expresses the fact that movement and tendency towards God must be the aim, as it is the centre and source of the whole inner life. In this tendency and movement it is required that there be stability, fixedness, steadfastness, proceeding from a heart which is immovably and unshakably fixed on Him alone. Thereby is the second requirement fulfilled: **Serve him only.** — *Erdmann.* **He will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.** — The foundation thought here is this: Re-establish your covenant relation to God by honest and thorough conversion, manifested by the putting away of all idol deities, and then God

ra-el did put away Ba'al-im⁶ and Ash'ta-roth, and served the Lord only.

5. And Sam'u-el said, Gather all Is'ra-el to Miz'peh, and I will pray for you unto the Lord.

6. And they gathered together to Miz'peh, and drew water, and poured⁷ it out before the Lord, and fasted on that day, and said there, We⁸

have sinned against the Lord. And Sam'u-el judged the children of Is'ra-el in Miz'peh.

7. And when the Phi-lis'tines heard that the children of Is'ra-el were gathered together to Miz'peh, the lords of the Phi-lis'tines went up against Is'ra-el. And when the children of Is'ra-el heard it, they were afraid of the Phi-lis'tines.

⁶ Judg. 2 : 11.

⁷ Job 16 : 20 ; Jer. 9 : 1.

⁸ Judg. 10 : 10 ; Ps. 106 : 6 ; Jer. 3 : 13, 14.

also will turn to you, so that you shall no longer have to lament after Him, and will again announce His relation to you as your covenant God by saving you from your enemies. — *Erdmann*.

5. **Mizpeh.** — A city of Benjamin (Josh. 18 : 26), principally celebrated for the events recorded in this chapter, and for the inauguration of Saul. Chap. 10 : 17. — *Terry*. **I will pray for you unto the Lord.** — Other instances of Samuel's prayers are mentioned in 8 : 6 ; 12 : 17-19, 23 ; 15 : 11. He is quoted as the type of successful intercessors in Ps. 99 : 6 Jer. 15 : 1. — *Kirkpatrick*.

6. **Drew water, and poured it out before the Lord.** — Dr. Kitto thinks that this act was the confirmation of an oath — a solemn vow ; and tells us that such is an oriental method of confirming an oath or a promise. But, in the absence of any analogous custom recorded in Scripture (and we have there many forms for oaths), we adhere to the more common interpretation, and understand this pouring out of water as a symbolical action indicating their humiliation and contrition before God. Thus the Targum paraphrases it : *They poured out their heart like water in penitence before the Lord*. **Fasted.** — A further sign of their repentance and humiliation. — *Terry*. **We have sinned against the Lord.** — They made a public confession. Cp. Judg. 10 : 10. — *Kirkpatrick*. **Samuel judged the children of Israel.** — Samuel's judicial office is here named for the first time. The connection in which it occurs shows how it proceeded from and was founded on his prophetic office. — *Erdmann*. The functions which Samuel executed there were twofold, civil and military. As civil judge he did exactly what Moses did, as described in Ex. 18 : 13-16, "judged between one and another, and made them know the statutes of God and his laws ; as military judge he did what Othniel, Ehud, Barak, and Gideon had done before him, — organized and marshalled the people for effectual resistance to their oppressors, and led them out to victory. — *Cook*.

7. **When the Philistines heard, etc.** — The lords naturally regarded a national assembly of their vassals as a preliminary step towards revolt, and mustering the army of the confederation, marched up towards Mizpeh. — *Kirkpatrick*.

8. And the children of Is'ra-el said to Sam'u-el, Cease not to cry unto the Lord our God for⁹ us, that he will save us out of the hand of the Phi-lis'tines.

9. And Sam'u-el took a suckling lamb, and offered *it* for a burnt offering wholly unto the Lord: and Sam'u-el cried unto the Lord for Is'ra-el: and the Lord heard¹⁰ him.

10. And as Sam'u-el was

offering up the burnt offering, the Phi-lis'tines drew near to battle against Is'ra-el; but the Lord thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Phi-lis'tines, and discomfited¹¹ them: and they were smitten before Is'ra-el.

11. And the men of Is'ra-el went out of Miz'peh, and pursued the Phi-lis'tines, and smote them, until *they came* under Beth'car.

⁹ Isa. 37 : 4.

¹⁰ Ps. 99 : 6; James 5 : 16.

¹¹ Ps. 18 : 14.

8. **Cease not.**—The marginal reading is more accurate, *Be not silent from us from crying*. They now feel that if deliverance comes at all, it must come from Jehovah. — *Terry*.

9. **A sucking lamb.**—*A lamb of milk*, that is, young and tender, only seven or eight days old (Lev. 22:27), such being the most suitable to represent the nation that had awakened up to new life through its conversion to the Lord, and was, as it were, "new-born." — *Keil*. **For a burnt offering wholly unto the Lord.**—The whole animal was burnt upon the altar to denote the entire consecration to Jehovah of those who were pleading for deliverance. — *Kirkpatrick*. For the law of burnt offerings see Levit. 1:10-13. — *Cook*. **And the Lord heard him.**—Better, *answered him*. Comp. Ps. 99:6, and note on v. 5. — *Kirkpatrick*.

10. **And as Samuel, etc.**—This verse explains more in detail the brief statement in the preceding verse, and shows how and when the answer was given. For the immediate answer to prayer compare Isa. 65:24. — *Cook*. **Thundered with a great thunder.**—Lit., *with a great voice*. Thunder is the "voice of God" (Ps. 29:3, 4). Comp. ch. 2:10; 2 Sam. 22:14, 15. **Discomfited them.**—The Hebrew word expresses the *confusion of a sudden panic*, and is especially used of *super-natural* defeats. Comp. Ex. 14:24 (E. V. *troubled*); Josh. 10:10; Judg. 4:15; 2 Sam. 22:15. — *Kirkpatrick*.

11. **And the men of Israel, etc.**—They doubtless interpreted the thunder as the answer to Samuel's prayer, and encouraged by this assurance of God's aid, went out boldly against the Philistines, and finding them in a panic from the same thunder, attacked them, and put them to flight, and slew numbers in the pursuit. — *Cook*. **Until they came under Beth-car.**—The site of Beth-car is unknown, but must have been off to the west or southwest of Mizpeh, perhaps as far as the great plain of Philistia. *Under* Beth-car may imply that this place was situated on some eminence; or the meaning may be *below*, that is, beyond, Beth-car. We may reasonably suppose that the men of Israel continued their pursuit for several days, not giving it over until they had gained from the Philistines all that they had lost through them aforetime. — *Terry*.

12. Then Sam'u-el took a stone¹² and set it between Miz'peh and Shen, and called the name of it Eb'en-e'zer, saying, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.

13. So the Phi-lis'tines were subdued, and they came no more into the coast of Is'ra-el: and the hand of the Lord was

against the Phi-lis'tines all the days of Sam'u-el.

14. And the cities which the Phi-lis'tines had taken from Is'ra-el were restored to Is'ra-el from Ek'rón even unto Gath: and the coasts thereof did Is'ra-el deliver out of the hands of the Phi-lis'tines. And there was peace between Is'ra-el and the Am'o-rites.

¹² Gen. 28 : 18, 19.

¹³ Chap. 8 : 4.

12. **Eben-ezer.** — That is, "*The Stone of Help*;" a memorial set up between Mizpeh and Shen (in Hebrew with the definite article), = "*The Tooth*;" probably some conspicuous "tooth" or spire of rock. Cp. 14 : 4. The exact place is unknown, but "exactly at the spot where twenty years before they had obtained their great victory the Philistines were totally routed." **Hitherto, etc.** — That is, *Up to this time*. The deliverances of the past are a pledge of continued help for the future. — *Kirkpatrick*.

13. **Came no more into the coast of Israel.** — They did not succeed in regaining what they had lost in Israel; they came no more as they had been wont to come, driving Israel before them and bringing them into subjection. The passage does not mean that the Philistines made no further attempt to enter the territory of Israel, for the contrary is implied in the words that immediately follow. **The hand of the Lord was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel.** — They made repeated attempts to regain their lost cause, and Saul kept up a constant war against them all his days (chap. 14 : 52), but not until after the death of Samuel did they enter *triumphantly* the coast of Israel. Chap. 31 : 1. While the holy Samuel lived all their efforts to conquer Israel resulted in defeat. He thus completed the deliverance which Samson began many years before. Judges 13 : 5. — *Terry*.

14. **From Ekron even unto Gath.** — The towns which lay on the Danite frontier between these places were restored to Israel, not however including Ekron and Gath themselves. There is no evidence that Gath had ever been occupied by the Israelites, and Ekron was only held for a short time (Judg. 1 : 18). **The coasts thereof.** — The territory belonging to these frontier towns. — *Kirkpatrick*. The following words: **And there was peace between Israel and the Amorites**, suggest, what is in itself very probable, that in this war the Amorites, finding the Philistines worse masters than the Israelites, made common cause with Samuel, and assisted the Israelites in their wars against the Philistines. — *Cook*. This signal fact is mentioned because the Amorites were the most powerful of the Canaanitish nations, and therefore the historical importance of such a peace between them and Israel. Some expositors understand that the word Amorites here designates all the Canaanitish nations besides the Philistines. — *Terry*.

15. And Sam'u-el judged Is'ra-el all the days of his life.

16. And he went from year to year in circuit to Beth'el, and Gil'gal, and Miz'peh, and

judged Is'ra-el in all those places.

17. And his return was to Ra'mah: for there was his house; and there he judged Is'ra-el; and there he built an altar unto the Lord.

15. Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. — This, like the statement of v. 13, must be understood with qualifications: for (a) Samuel in his old age made his sons Judges (8:1); (b) Saul was made king a considerable time before Samuel's death. But it does not contradict the subsequent history. Clearly his sons supplemented but did not supersede their father's judicial office; and Samuel retained a civil and religious authority even after Saul had become the military leader of the people. — *Kirkpatrick*.

16. To Bethel. — About eight miles north of Jerusalem the ruins of *Beitem* mark the site of the ancient city of *Beth-el*. For a graphic description of Bethel, see Stanley's *Sinai and Palestine*, pp. 217-223. — *Kirkpatrick*. Gilgal. — It is uncertain whether Gilgal in the valley of the Jordan, or the modern Jiljilia, the Gilgal of 2 Kings 2:1; 4:38, be meant; but far most probably the former. — *Cook*. Mizpeh. — See note, v. 5. — These places, with Ramah, he seems to have designated as places where he might be found at certain stated seasons of each year, and where the people from the neighboring districts might resort unto him for counsel or judgment. — *Terry*.

17. And his return was to Ramah. — Here was his permanent residence as householder. In respect to his work there, we have two brief statements: (1) He acted as judge, when he was not absent on his circuit. His judicial labors were therefore *uninterrupted*. (2) There he built an altar unto the Lord. — The priesthood had declined, the central sanctuary was broken up; instead of the local and the institutional-personal uniting point in the high-priest, Samuel forms from now on for the religious life and service also of Israel the personal centre consecrated by God's choice and guidance. His priestly work continues along with his judicial, both embraced and supported by the prophetic. Besides the already existing holy places, whose prayer and sacrifice were offered to God, he makes his residence a place of worship. The direction and furtherance of matters of religious life and worship is in his hands. Having effected a thorough reformation of the deep-sunken theocratic life on the basis of the renewed relation between God and the people, he now proceeds vigorously, as judge, priest, and prophet, to build it up and finish it on this foundation. — *Erdmann*.

ANALYSIS AND EXPOSITION.

Introduction. — The conflict is at an end, Israel is smitten, the ark of God is taken, and the predicted ruin of the house of Eli is accomplished. Elated with their success, the Philistines carry home the ark of the Lord in triumph, and

place it in the house of Dagon, their national god, in the city of Ashdod. But their triumph was soon checked. On the morrow the idol was found lying on its face upon the ground. In vain it was set up in its place again. The next day saw it a second time laid prostrate, and broken, without head or hands. Moreover, the inhabitants of the city were smitten with a sore disease, till, terrified, they demanded the removal of the ark from their city. Then they carried it to Gath; but there too the same plague broke out. And when they would have sent it to Ekron, another city, all its inhabitants rose up in alarm and declared that they would not receive it within their walls (chap. 5). Thus, after seven months, the Philistines consulted how they might return the ark of the Lord to Israel. At the instance of their priests, the ark was placed in a new cart, drawn by two milch-kine, which had never been yoked, with a trespass-offering of gold in a coffer. Left to their own guidance, the kine, without turning to the right hand or the left, took the road to Beth-shemesh, a Levitical city situated under the hills of Dan. The inhabitants of the city were gathering their wheat harvest in the valley, and, "lifting up their eyes, they saw the ark of the Lord returning, and rejoiced to see it." The kine did not stop till they had reached the field of Joshua, an inhabitant of the place, where there was a great stone. The Levites took down the ark, clave the wood of the cart, and offered up the kine as a sacrifice to Jehovah. The curiosity of the people overcame their reverence for holy things, they approached the ark, and though even the priests were not allowed to touch it, removed the lid and looked into it. For this many were stricken with instant death. The men of Beth-shemesh, terrified, sent to Kirjath-jearim, requesting them to take away the ark from their city (chap. 6). They acceded to the request, "and brought it into the house of Abinadab, in the hill, and sanctified Eleazar his son to keep the ark of the Lord" (v. 1). Here the ark continued about forty-six years. It was placed there about eight months after the death of Eli, and was removed by David in the seventh year of his reign. The words "for it was twenty years" (v. 2) should be connected with the following sentence, "and all the house of Israel lamented after the Lord." Thus twenty years had elapsed before they began to revive from their sad state of religious decline.

Lesson Topics.—I. National Reformation. II. National Prosperity.

I. NATIONAL REFORMATION (vs. 3-6).—Here we have a repetition of the same old story in the life of Israel. They "did evil in the sight of the Lord," the divine anger was kindled against them, defeat and misery followed, these lead them to turn again to God, and he mercifully hears their cry and interposes on their behalf. This he does, in this instance, through the ministry of his servant, Samuel.

1. *Samuel's reappearance.* "And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel" (v. 3). The prophet has been absent from

the scene since the third chapter. Where has he been during all these years? What has he been doing? Why has he been silent so long? To these questions we have no certain answer. Perhaps he abode in solitude and silence, bowed down under the consciousness of future responsibility and the weight of unknown but approaching events, that he might gather strength for the struggles that lay before him. Perhaps he was concealed by God from the nation's view until the discipline of affliction should bring the people to repentance, and lead them to "lament after the Lord," thus preparing them for the reception of the truth. However this may be, Samuel now appears with all the energy of spiritual fortitude consequent upon deep devotion, seeking to excite in other hearts the aspiration of his own. His spirituality was the strength and glory of his character as a man, a prophet, and a judge. He moved the people and moulded the nation, not by mere intellectual power, but by the intensity of his devotion to the Lord. God so permeated his life and conduct that the people felt their nearness to the divine, and instinctively paid homage.

2. *Samuel's Expostulation* (vs. 3, 4). The purport of this expostulation is: If ye sincerely and in uprightness of heart lament after the Lord, and desire to serve him, do two things: reform your worship; and reform your lives. First, remove from the midst of you the strange gods; cast away from you those abominable idols, Baalim and Ashtaroth. Then, reform your lives. Let your hearts return unto the Lord, with the solemn purpose of serving him alone; and thus demonstrate your sincerity. Seek him in the way of obedience, for there he will be found. This is your part of the covenant; which if you fail not to fulfil, God will faithfully perform his—"he will deliver you out of the hands of the Philistines." The people were smarting under the inflictions of cruelty. They were a vanquished nation, exhausted by years of subjection, but at last their sorrow broke into hope, and they determined to seek redress. In this crisis Samuel is sent to them. And he does not suggest a series of civil enactments, or great warlike preparation, as calculated to obtain freedom and happiness, but penetrating to the deepest source of defeat, urges a return to God. We have statesmen, so called, in our own country to-day, who would sneer at this primitive mode of government, but if they were wiser they would learn a lesson from its success. Political woes are often to be remedied by moral reform, not by the mock contrition of place-seeking politicians, but by the devout penitence of guilt-stricken spirits.

This expostulation has an application to us as individuals. It behooves each one of us to hearken to this call of Samuel: "If ye return unto the Lord with all your hearts;" that is, if you are sincere, if you seek him in truth, and are not of the number of those of whom he says, "This people draweth near to me with their lips, but their heart is far from me." How many among us seem to have been lamenting after the Lord for years, and yet remain the same! How many there are who say, "I

wish to be a true Christian; I want more faith, more holiness, more of the divine life in my soul; but I have been taught to believe that these are gifts that must come from above, and are not of ourselves, and all I can do is wait for them." Take care of self-deception. Take care that there be not a lie in your right hand. All these graces are, doubtless, the gift of God. This is a fundamental truth, which cannot be too frequently repeated. But they are offered upon certain conditions, which you must meet. There are steps to be taken by you in proof of your sincerity; which steps, it may be, you have never thought of taking; idols to be cast out of the temple of your heart, and which you still suffer to remain; decisions which God requires of you, and which you have withheld to this hour. Remaining as you are till the end of life, you will find yourselves numbered with the unbelievers; and it will be said of you, "Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter; for thy heart is not right in the sight of God." "If ye do return unto the Lord with all your hearts;" if this be indeed the case, reform your worship, reform your lives. Neglect not your part of the covenant; and God, you may be assured, will not neglect his.

This expostulation of Samuel was timely. It was not uttered while the people showed themselves still hardened in sin, negligent of the claims of God, and averse to the duties of religion. It was when all the people, acknowledging themselves sinners, cried for mercy, and "lamented after the Lord." Truth is powerful as it is appropriate. He is a wise teacher who knows when to speak and when to be silent; what to say and how to say it. As would be expected, this expostulation of Samuel was successful. "Then the children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ashtaroth, and served the Lord only" (v. 4).

3. *The Convention at Mizpeh* (vs. 5, 6). The prudent Samuel was not satisfied. He dreaded the reappearance of that vacillation which this people had too often manifested. He consequently seized on this moment of religious consecration and fervor to elevate the hearts of his brethren in prayer to the Giver of all grace, that he would not abandon them to their natural inconstancy, but would enable them to be faithful to the vows they had just made. He proclaimed to all the tribes, "Gather all Israel to Mizpeh, and I will pray for you unto the Lord." Mizpeh, in the borders of Benjamin, was frequently used for public gatherings, being conveniently situated in the very heart of the land. As all the people had induced the national apostasy, had participated in violating the covenant, all were involved in guilt, hence a universal humiliation was requisite. The people approached God by prayer, in which they were led by Samuel; by fasting and humiliation, and by hearty confession. It was a sublime scene. Picture to your imagination this vast multitude arriving on the elevated plains of Mizpeh, out of all the tribes of Israel, — one purpose in every heart. And what is the object of their assembling together? Time had been when these plains of Mizpeh had witnessed the assembling of four hundred thousand men of

Israel, with drawn swords, to make war upon the tribe of Benjamin. But now they meet as brethren; they meet to pray. They have again obtained a view of their merciful God, and they are met to implore his divine favor. As for themselves, they can make no mention, save of their own unworthiness. Their hearts are stirred by penitent joy. They "drew water and poured it out before the Lord."

Some have thought this a ceremony belonging to legal purification, or an expression of deep humiliation or expiation, but it is more probable that they poured out this water in token of joy, as they were accustomed to do at the Feast of Tabernacles. Samuel had just told them that if they repented God would deliver them out of the hands of the Philistines; therefore it was natural that they should rejoice. The full meaning of this symbolical act is given us by Isaiah, in his twelfth chapter: "And in that day thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me. Therefore, with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation."

II. NATIONAL PROSPERITY (vs. 7-17). — The newly-awakened faith of the Israelites was very soon severely tried. The Philistines mistaking their religious assembly for a military gathering, collected their forces and prepared to give them battle. Even while the whole people were humbling themselves before God, the report resounded through the camp of Israel that a powerful army of Philistines was advancing on Mizpeh. At this unexpected intelligence the first feeling of the people was one of dismay and terror. They were almost entirely without arms; it was too late to flee; their escape, according to all human apprehension, was utterly impossible. In their extremity they turned to God. They said to Samuel, "Cease not to cry unto the Lord our God for us, that he will save us out of the hands of the Philistines." The sight of the people thus, with one accord committing their cause to God, must have deeply moved the soul of the faithful prophet. Already the Philistines were within sight, advancing against Israel in the order of battle; and all the host were looking with wistful eyes to Samuel as their intercessor with God. "And Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a burnt offering wholly unto the Lord: and Samuel cried unto the Lord for Israel; and the Lord heard him." The godly man could now pray for the Israelites conscientiously and with confidence, for they had forsaken their sins. They had put themselves in a position where God could bless them. In the very moment of the attack the Almighty caused a terrific thunder-storm to burst forth, accompanied by an earthquake, and the Philistines flying in alarm were pursued with great slaughter by the victorious Israelites. There on the very spot, where twenty years before the Philistines had gained their greatest triumph, Samuel set up a huge stone in memory of his victory, and named it EBENEZER, that is, *stone of help*, saying, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." The effects of this victory were very great. The oppression of

the Philistines, which had lasted for forty years, was broken, and "they came no more" "all the days of Samuel." Their territory was restored, and peace reigned in all their borders. Samuel was confirmed in his judgeship, and year after year he faithfully discharged the duties of his office. He dwelt at Ramah, his birthplace, "and there he built an altar unto the Lord." If a man is to be influential abroad he must be devotional at home.

God tests the faith of his people now, as he tested that of Israel, by subjecting it to fearful trial, and he strengthens it, now as then, by crowning it with striking deliverances. By the trial he brings them to pray; by the deliverance he induces them to give thanks. We should be as careful to express our thanks for the mercy as we are to cry in the need. Special answers to prayer should be followed by special memorials of praise. We should set up our Ebenezer, saying, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." "Hitherto," — what a long catalogue of events did that represent for Samuel; and what a multitude for ourselves — what contingencies, what deliverances, what mercies from the hand of God. Let us never fail to set up a memorial of his goodness.

OCT. 21, 1883.]

LESSON III.

[1 SAM. 8: 1-10.]

ASKING FOR A KING.

GOLDEN TEXT. — "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes." — Psa. 118: 9.

TIME. — B.C. 1095. **PLACE.** — Ramah.

LESSON-TEXT AND NOTES.

1. And it came to pass, when his sons judges over Is'ra-el.
Sam u-el was old, that he made 2. Now the name of his first

1. **When Samuel was old, etc.** — This implies a long period, probably not less than twenty years, of which we have no account except what is contained in the brief notice in chap. 7: 13-17. The general idea conveyed is of a time of peace and prosperity, analogous to that under the other Judges. — *Cook.* **Made his sons Judges.** — Not with authority equal to his own, but assistant judges, who might attend to judicial matters in remote places, to which Samuel's age prevented his going. — *Terry.* As we do not find that either God or the people censured him for making his sons judges in Israel, we may infer that he had properly educated them, and that they appeared well qualified for the office, and were appointed to it for the good, and by the approbation of, the people. — *Scott.*

2. **Now the name, etc.** — Joel = "Jehovah is God;" Abiah = "Jah is my father;" names significant of a protest against the prevalent idol-

born was Jo'el; and the name of his second, A-bi'ah: *they were judges in Beer'she-ba.*

3. And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre,¹ and took bribes,² and perverted judgment.

4. Then all the elders of Is'-ra-el gathered themselves to-

¹ Ex. 18:21; ¹ Tim. 3:3.

² Prov. 29:4.

³ Deut. 17:14; Hosea 13:10.

gether, and came to Sam'u-el unto Ra'mah.

5. And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king³ to judge us like all the nations.

6. But the thing displeased Sam'u-el, when they said, Give

etry. — *Kirkpatrick.* **Judges in Beersheba.** — Their chief seat was there, as Samuel's was at Ramah. Probably the recovery under Samuel of many cities from the Philistines (chap. 7:14) made it expedient to have some kind of magistrates appointed in the southern part of the country. — *Terry.* Beersheba was on the extreme southern frontier of Judah, as seen in the proverbial "From Dan to Beer-shaba." — *Cook.*

3. **They walked not in his ways.** — Their official unfaithfulness is contrasted with their *father's walk*. This fact or judgment alone is given, and Samuel is not, like Eli, charged with the blame of his sons' misconduct. The words, *they inclined*, or **turned aside after lucre**, exhibit the roots of their wicked official procedure in a mind directed to gain. Luther gives the correct sense: "they turned aside to *covetousness*." — *Erdmann.* *Lucre* (from Lat. *lucrum*) is only used in the E. V. in a bad sense of *ill-gotten gain*. — *Kirkpatrick.* **Took bribes, etc.** — A manifest reference to Deut. 16:19 (somewhat obscured by the English version), where it is said to the judge, "Thou shalt not pervert judgment, . . . thou shalt not take a bribe." — *Cook.*

4. **Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together.** — This was evidently the general council or assembly of the nation, which is, ch. 5:7, 10, 19, 21, called "the people," as represented by the elders as their heads (cf. ch. 10:17, 19; 11:14; 12:1). — *J. F. & B.*

5. **And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, etc.** — *Two things* they adduce as *ground* of the demand which they wish to make — (1) Samuel's *age*, that is, the lack of vigor and energy in the government, which, with his advancing age, made itself perceptible to the whole nation, and was not supplied by the assistance of his sons, which he had for that reason (v. 1) called in; (2) the *evil walk*, the misgovernment of his sons, the moral and legal depravation which they produced. The *demand* is: **Make us a king** (Acts 13:21); and two things are added: (1) in reference to this judicial work: *he was to judge*; the royal office was to take the place of the judicial, and so the meaning of the demand is a complete abrogation of the hitherto existing form of government under Judges; (2) in reference to the royal monarchical constitution of the surrounding nations. Israel will not be behind other nations in respect to the splendor and power of royal rule. The accordance of the last words, **like all the nations** with Deut. 17:14 is to be noted. — *Erdmann.*

6. **The thing displeased Samuel.** — But the cause of his displeasure is expressly said to be, that they made the demand: **Give us a king to judge us.** He did not, therefore, take it amiss that they blamed the

us a king to judge us. And Sam'u-el prayed unto the Lord.

7. And the Lord said unto Sam'u-el, Hearken unto the

voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for⁴ they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.

⁴ Ex. 16: 8; Matt. 10: 40.

wrong-doing of his sons, nor that they referred to his age, and thus intimated that he was no longer able to bear the whole burden of the office, which his sons did evilly. What displeased him was the expression of desire for a king as ruler. How far and why this demand was the occasion of his displeasure appears from the connection. From the words of Samuel (12: 2) we see (1) that the people, pressed anew by the Ammonites, demanded a king who should give them the protection against enemies, which was not expected from the aging Samuel; (2) that, in this demand, they left out of view the kingdom of God in their midst, turned away their heart from the God who had hitherto, as their Almighty King, so often saved them from the power of the enemy, and put their trust in an external, visible kingdom, as means of safety and protection against their enemies, over against the invisible royal rule of their God, whose instrument, Samuel, they rejected. — *Erdmann*. **Samuel prayed, etc.** — A beautiful example of prayer to obtain the composure of ruffled feelings, and to have the judgment directed aright by God's Holy Spirit, when it is in danger of being overruled by personal motives. — *Cook*.

7. **They have rejected me.** — The government of Jehovah over Israel was real, not imaginary; and the outward manifestations of the Theocracy were more clearly recognized under the rule of the judges than under the hereditary monarchy. At the same time it appears that the Divine displeasure was provoked rather by the sins which had produced that disordered state of the kingdom which the monarchy was expected to remove, and by the motives which led the people to desire its establishment, than by the change in the form of government viewed in itself, — a change which was by no means necessarily inconsistent with the continuance of the Theocracy. This consideration will help to remove any apparent inconsistency between the directions given to Samuel to comply with the request of the people as to the appointment of a king, and the rejection of the Divine rule which was involved in that request. — *Elliot*. The reason of Samuel's necessary displeasure at this desire clearly appears from the judgment passed on it in the Divine response: "They have not rejected thee; but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them." In their request for a king they did not assume the attitude of heart and of mind to the Lord, which was proper for them as His people, towards Him as their sole and exclusive ruler. They put out of sight the divine rule, to which in view of its mighty deeds in their history, they ought to have trusted implicitly, that it would extend to them the oft verified protection against external enemies and maladministration of the office of judges; this protection they expect from the earthly-human kingly rule instead of from God; instead of crying to God to give them a ruler according to His will, they demand from Samuel

8. According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of E'gypt even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me, and served other gods, so do they also unto thee.

9. Now therefore hearken

unto their voice: howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and shew⁵ them the manner of the king that shall reign over them.

10. And Sam'u-el told all the words of the Lord unto the people that asked of him a king.

⁵ Chap. 10: 25; 14: 52.

that a king be made according to their will and pleasure; instead of their holy civil constitution under the royal rule of their covenant-God, they desire a constitution under a visible kingdom, as they see it in the heathen nations. This was a denial of that highest truth which Gideon (Judg. 8: 23), in declining the royal authority offered him, held up before the people: "The Lord is your king." In rejecting Samuel's government, they rejected the will of God, and, straying from the foundation of covenant-relation to the standpoint of the heathen nations, they put themselves in opposition to the royal majesty of God revealed among them, and to the high calling which they had to maintain and fulfil in fidelity and obedience towards the holy and Almighty God as their king and ruler. — *Erdmann*.

8. According to all the works. — The same idolatrous tendency, the same unbelief in an invisible government, has been in them throughout. With that tendency have I been striving by a series of wonderful, orderly methods; you experience the bitterness of it now. — *Maurice*. So do they also unto thee. — It is in the spirit of our Lord's saying to the apostles: "The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord," Matt. 10: 24 (comp. John 15: 18, 20). — *Cook*.

9. Now therefore, etc. — Taking up the thread from v. 7, which had been interrupted by the intervening matter in vs. 7, 8, the drift of the answer is this: "Do what the people ask, set a king over them, yet at the same time point out to them the inconveniences of the kingdom which they desire." The *therefore* might be rendered "so," or "yet," or "but," and must not be understood as implying that the ingratitude of the people, was the *reason* for complying with their request. For a comment on this transaction, see Hosea 13: 9-11; Acts 13: 21, 22. — *Cook*. The manner of the king. — The powers and privileges which a king will think it his right to exercise. See vs. 11-18. — *Terry*. The injunction, to set before the people the *right* [or manner] of the king they demanded, is intended to exhibit to them the human kingdom apart from the divine rule, as it exists among the other nations, with all its usual and established despotism, as the source of great misfortune and shameful servitude, in contrast with the freedom and happiness offered to the people under the despised Theocracy. Comp. v. 18. — *Erdmann*.

10. Samuel told all the words of the Lord unto the people. — As faithfully as when he bore the unwelcome message to Eli (chap 3: 18). The childlike trait of obedience he retained in his old age. The greatness of Samuel's character is shown in nothing more strikingly than that,

after finding the change sanctioned by God, he not only waived further opposition, but led the new movement, with calm wisdom, to a successful issue. — *Geike*.

ANALYSIS AND EXPOSITION.

Introduction.—Samuel was a man of peace. The discomfiture of the Philistines at Ebenezer was the first and, so far as we are informed, the only military achievement in which he had any part. His character as a judge, and the course of his public life, while perfectly consistent with his education and profession as a prophet, were thus in remarkable contrast to those of the judges of Israel who had preceded him. These had generally distinguished themselves by some act of individual heroism, or military prowess, by which the power of the enemies of Israel was broken. Samuel appears to have directed his efforts principally to the moral and religious elevation of the people of Israel themselves. His first care was to repress disorder, to punish crime, and enforce obedience to the law. For this purpose "he went from year to year in circuit to Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpeh, and judged Israel in all these places;" returning to his own residence at Ramah, where also he heard causes and administered justice (7: 16, 17). Furthermore, he endeavored to give the people efficient instruction. This he did by providing for the education of their teachers. At Ramah, Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpeh he gathered together Schools of the Prophets, where promising youths lived together under a head or leading prophet, whom they called their "Father," while they were termed his "sons." Here they studied the Law of Moses, composed sacred poetry, became skilled in sacred music, preserved and copied historical records, and from the history of God's past dealings with their nation drew forth warning and encouragement for their own generation. By this means the law of God became more generally known, and a decided improvement in the spirit and practice of the people was the result.

But as Samuel advanced in years these official labors became too great for his failing strength; and he availed himself of the aid of his sons, Joel and Abiah, in their performance (v. 1). But if they did not sin so fearfully as the sons of Eli, they did not follow in the footsteps of their upright and godly father; they "turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment" (v. 3). This delinquency was the occasion of a total change in the government of Israel.

Lesson Topics.—I. The Demand of the People. II. The Effect upon Samuel. III. The answer of the Lord.

I. THE DEMAND OF THE PEOPLE (vs. 4, 5).—As Samuel was old, the wicked conduct of his sons led the elders of Israel to consider the dangers and exigencies of the state. They saw that, with the death of the aged judge, they would be deprived of much of the efficiency and integrity of the government.

Then there appeared to them a need for a military leader. On the west the Philistines had begun to rise. On the east the Ammonites threatened the cities of Gilead. There was no known general to command the nation's armies and lead them to the fight. But while these circumstances had weight, they do not form the great reason for the demand of the people, and the establishment of the monarchy. This is to be found in the necessity which, under the theocracy, existed for national piety in order to national power. Faithful to God, they were invincible. But when they "did evil in the sight of the Lord," they were at the mercy of their enemies. While the elders of Israel lamented their political weakness and national prostration, two ways opened before them as means to an improvement in public affairs. The first invited them to give their hearts to God, and, uniting their influence and exertions to the efforts of the prophet, to aim at a perfect restoration of national prosperity and power, by means of a thorough revival of their religion; the other was, to pass by the peculiar claims and privileges of the theocracy, and to fall back upon the principles and policy of other nations. Unhappily for Israel the latter and lower course was adopted. Forgetting that God was their King, they went to Samuel and desired him to appoint a king over them. Hence, when the prophet lamented over this decision before God, the Lord said, "They have not rejected *thee*, but they have rejected *ME*" (v. 7).

But the elders of Israel did not present to Samuel this greatest reason for their demand, even if they acknowledged it to themselves. They confine themselves to two considerations,—the old age of Samuel, and the misconduct of his sons. In thus approaching the aged judge, they unconsciously do homage to his lofty character. "No nation, perhaps, can render so noble a testimony to the integrity and public spirit of its ruler, as when, in the conviction that he will do right, they call upon him to lay down his own power for the public good, and leave to him the organization of the new government and the choice of the ruler who is to supersede him. This was what the elders of Israel did when they appeared before Samuel at Ramah and requested of him the establishment of a regal government." Nevertheless—

1. *Their course was ungrateful and cruel.* No man living had served their secular and religious interests as Samuel had. He had a sacred claim upon the regard and gratitude of every Israelite. And though his sun was gone down, they should have tenderly respected the lingering brightness which yet tinted the evening horizon. Their conduct was as cruel as it was ungrateful. "And thy sons walk not in thy ways." This must have been beyond measure painful to the aged father. The elders here expose their folly. They make Samuel's legislation and example a standard of equity, a pattern for the imitation of his sons, even while they are demanding his retirement and the establishment of an entirely new order of

things. They were unjust to the venerable father. Although the injustice of his sons was prejudicial to national comfort and prosperity, it was not his fault but his sorrow and misfortune.

2. *Their reasons were only frivolous pretexts.* "Behold thou art old." Doubtless the old age of Samuel was a national misfortune. Israel could ill afford his departure from the duties of active life. But this furnishes no ground for a complete change in the form of government. The misconduct of Joel and Abiah was not irremediable. They might have been deposed, honest men might have been elected from the nation to assist Samuel in his duties, then the present form of government might have been continued. But no, the people were bent on having a king, and the real reason why they desired it, as we have seen, was not brought to view.

II. THE EFFECT UPON SAMUEL (v. 6).—It is difficult to imagine the feelings of Samuel as he listens to this demand for a king. The history simply states that "the thing displeased Samuel . . . and Samuel prayed unto the Lord." Writing on this verse, F. D. Maurice says: "But the thing displeased Samuel, and he cried unto the Lord. Why did it displease him? Men who think themselves very clever have answered, 'Of course, because he was seeking to aggrandize his own family. He had a cunning plan of advancing his sons which this new proposition would defeat.' It is not necessary to confute such a notion by proclaiming that the characters in Scripture are different from other characters. It is quite enough to say that if such a character as Samuel's were met with in any history whatever, this would be a low, paltry, vulgar way of accounting for his acts. He had all his life been possessed with one great conviction, that the righteous God was King of the land. In his name and in his strength he had been putting down wrong and asserting right. He had taken no man's ass, and had handled no bribes, had sought for truth in his inward parts, and had striven to speak and act the truth outwardly. To suppose that he had been plotting all his days for those miserable objects which have made popes execrable, and have overthrown kingdoms of modern dynasts, is to confound all distinctions, to make the records of humanity merely the records of the pettinesses and crimes which have destroyed it. If Samuel was conscious of any such desire in his heart,—and it may doubtless have been there, as any, even the vilest desire may be working in him who abhors it most,—he would, indeed, have cried to the Lord to deliver him from such godlessness and his nation from the effects of it. He did cry to the Lord because the thing displeased him, because he had a sense that there was something very wrong in the wish which his countrymen were cherishing; perhaps—and such a feeling was not wrong, though wrong might be very near it—because he discovered in them much ingratitude to himself; because he thought his government was better than any they would substitute for it; because he did not believe, or tried not to believe, the ills which were imputed to his sons. All these were good reasons for praying to the Lord;

for a man does that with very little fervency if he is quite clear about his own conclusions, if he sees his way, and is in no sort of embarrassment or perplexity. It is a sense of dimness and confusion which drives us to the source of light. We do not know what we ought to think about this thing or that, and we want to be told what we should think about it; we want to have our displeasure deepened, and taken away if it is wrong; or if, as most often happens, it is partly right and partly wrong, that the good should be separated from the evil, the first reinforced with God's own might, the other utterly cast out. In such a state of mind, I apprehend, Samuel prayed unto the Lord, or else into such a state of mind he came while he was praying. And so his prayers led to an honest, practical result, a result to which the displeasure without the prayer would certainly not have brought him."

III. THE ANSWER OF THE LORD (vs. 7-10). — "Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee." This response must have been a great surprise to the prophet, and not less so the explanation which accompanies it: *For* they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them." The difficulty lies deeper than Samuel had thought. Not because they have grown tired of him, but because they have rejected God, the people want a king; and God being rejected the mischief is already accomplished. Nothing remains, therefore, but to let the people have their way until the consequent misery shall bring them back to God, as, in so many instances, it did. On this point the author above quoted well says: "Hearken unto them,—*for* they have rejected ME. Yield to them because they are doing a worse thing than you supposed they were doing. Let them have their way, seeing that they are not changing a mere form of government, but breaking loose from the principle upon which their nation has stood from its foundation. No contradiction can seem greater. . . . The unchangeableness of God is not to be confounded with the rigidity of a rule or a system. If it is so confounded the purpose and nature of his government are forgotten. He—the Perfect and Absolute Will—has created beings with wills, beings made in his own image. He educates them; he desires that they should know his will, that is to say, himself. They are to learn what they themselves are, what they would make of themselves, what he would make of them, partly by an experience of their own wilfulness, partly by the results which he brings to pass in spite of that wilfulness, nay, by means of it. This is the explanation of the paradox, 'Hearken unto them, for they have not rejected thee but me.' If this was a personal question, if the wish of the people was one which you might regard merely as an offence to *you*, there would be a pretext for fighting with them, and insisting upon their surrendering themselves to your judgment. But if you take a more accurate measure of their wrong, if you feel it to be an act of unbelief in my unseen government, and a desire to substitute a visible for an invisible ruler, you will not think

you can deal with such perverseness by any petty scheme of yours, by a mere adherence to existing forms. The evil requires a far deeper and more radical treatment; the people must be taught that they have an unseen ruler, and cannot live or act without one. The preservation of you as a judge, the preservation of the system of government by judges, would be no such lesson. It would only be a question between one kind of outward rule and another; you would be attaching the same kind of false and dangerous importance to the ancient scheme which they attach to the novel one. There is nothing strange in this desire of theirs. The same idolatrous tendency, the same unbelief in an invisible government, has been in them throughout (v. 8). And therefore tell them what manner of a king will reign over them. Let them know what this general of armies whom they crave for as a deliverer will do to bring them into bondage; but do not resist a desire which has a deeper meaning in it than you know, which will produce immediate sorrows, but in which is hidden a divine purpose for the good and not the destruction of your people.

"The Jews were asking for heavy punishments, which they needed, without which the evil that was in them could not have been brought to light or cured. But they were asking also for something besides punishment, for that in which lay the seeds of the highest blessing. The king to lead their armies would bring upon them all the plagues of which Samuel was commanded to warn them. But beneath this dark counterfeit image was hidden the image of a true king reigning in righteousness, the asserter of truth, order, unity in the land, the helper of the poor, who would not judge after the sight of his eyes, nor reprove after the hearing of his ears, but would smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips would slay the wicked. Such true kings, kings after his own heart, God would in due time bring forth. Such kings, instead of intercepting the rays of his light, instead of putting themselves in the place of him, would continually remind their subjects of his presence, would impart to them a sense of divine government which they had never possessed before, would make them understand that a true divine government must also be a true human government, that man is made in the image of God, that the heavenly officers are represented in the earthly. Samuel could see little of these good things, which lay hidden in the womb of time, to be brought forth in their appointed season. He could only walk in the dark by faith, not sight, slowly coming to understand so much of the divine precept as enabled him to obey it."

OCT. 28, 1883.]

LESSON IV.

[1 SAM. 10:17-27.

SAUL CHOSEN KING.

GOLDEN TEXT. — "And all the people shouted, and said, God save the king." — Verse 24.

TIME. — B.C. 1095. **PLACE.** — Mizpeh.

LESSON-TEXT AND NOTES.

17. And Sam'u-el called the people together unto the Lord to Mizpeh;¹ the Lord God of Is'ra-el, I brought up Is'ra-el out of E'gypt, and delivered you out

18. And said unto the children of Is'ra-el, Thus² saith of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all

¹ Chap. 7:5, 6.² Judges 2:2; 6:8, 9; Neh. 9:9, etc.

17. **Samuel called the people together.** — At a previous convention of the people at Ramah they had insisted on having a king (8:19), and the prophet, to whom the matter was intrusted, dismissed them to their homes that he might take the proper measures for accomplishing their desire. Having now, by providential guidance, found the man of Israel's desire (9:20), he again assembles the people for the purpose of publicly designating whom the Lord had chosen; and, that there may be no appearance of intrigue, he has the election publicly made by lot. — *Terry*. He convoked the national assembly, or "congregation of Israel," which had made the request for a king through its representative elders (8:4). This body was composed of all Israelites of twenty years old and upwards (Num. 1:3) who had not forfeited their privileges, together with foreigners admitted upon certain conditions. Its political functions were necessarily limited by the nature of the Theocracy, and consisted rather in accepting the declared will of Jehovah than in originating measures of its own. — *Kirkpatrick*. **Mizpeh.** [See Lesson II, verse 5, note.] — Where Samuel himself had brought the people to repentance, and had gained a victory over the Philistines by his prayers. See chap. 7:5. — *Wordsworth*.

18. **Thus saith the Lord.** — The "*thus saith the Lord*," answers to the "to the Lord" of v. 17. The people were called to assemble before the Lord to hear His word through the mouth of Samuel, as the latter had received it directly from the Lord. Samuel's discourse *first* sets before the people in curt, vigorous phrase the royal deeds of might which God the Lord had done for them: *the conduction from Egypt, the deliverance out of the hand of the Egyptians* (immediately after the Exodus) *and the deliverance out of the hand of all the kingdoms which had oppressed them*. This third period of the history embraces the whole time from the conquest of Canaan to the present, including the victory at Mizpeh (7:5), of which the stone before their eyes bore witness. The reference to the *kingdoms* from which God had delivered Israel is noteworthy, because after the pattern of *these* very kingdoms the Israelites

kingdoms, and of them that oppressed you:

19. And³ ye have this day rejected your God, who himself saved⁴ you out of all your adversities and your tribulations; and ye have said unto him, *Nay*, but set a king over us. Now therefore present yourselves before the Lord⁵

by your tribes and by your thousands.

20. And when Sam'u-el had caused all the tribes of Is'ra-el to come near, the tribe of Ben'ja-min was taken.

21. When he had caused the tribe of Ben'ja-min to come near by their families, the family of Mat'ri was taken,

³ Chap. 8 : 7, 19 ; 12 : 12.

⁴ Ps. 106 : 8-10 ; Isa. 63 : 9 ; Jer. 3 : 23.

⁵ Josh. 7 : 14, etc.

wished to have a king and an outward kingdom. There is in this a factual irony. — *Erdmann*. **I brought up Israel.** — *It was I who brought up Israel*. The pronoun is emphatic in contrast to *and ye* with which v. 19 begins. — *Kirkpatrick*. Observe the reference, so frequent in all parts of Scripture, to the Exodus, as an historical and well-known fact. — Exod. 20 : 2 ; Amos. 3 : 1 ; Hos. 11 : 1 ; 13 : 4, etc., etc. Ps. 80 : 8 ; 81 : 5 ; 105 : 23-45 ; 106 : 7 sqq. ; 135 : 9 sqq. ; 136 : 10 sqq., etc. — *Cook*.

19. **And ye have this day rejected your God.** — Once more the prophet is directed to rebuke the people for their ingratitude and unbelief. — *Kirkpatrick*. [See Lesson III, vs. 6, 7, note.] Their fault consisted not in the simple desire for a king, but in the fact that, forgetting God's royal achievements, they wished to have a visible mighty king like the heathen nations, and, not seeking help from oppressive enemies from the Lord, they desired a human king along with God, or instead of their invisible King, as helper out of all need and oppression. — *Erdmann*. **Before the Lord.** — In solemn assembly, in presence of His altar (7 : 9). — *Grey*. **By your tribes, and by your thousands.** — The natural subdivision of the nation into *tribes* ; of the tribes into *families* or *class* ; of the families into *houses* ; of the houses into *men* (Josh. 7 : 14) ; was supplemented by Moses with an artificial organization of *thousands*, *hundreds*, *fifties*, and *tens* (Ex. 18 : 25). The *thousand* corresponded to the *family*, and the terms appear to be used here as synonymous. Cp. chap. 23 : 23 ; Judg. 6 : 15 ; Josh. 22 : 14. — *Kirkpatrick*.

20. **The tribe of Benjamin was taken.** — We are not told expressly by what process the selection was made, but it was probably by casting lots. Comp. Josh. 7 : 14 ff. The lot was in common use among all nations of antiquity. It is regarded in Scripture not as a chance decision, but as a legitimate method of ascertaining the divine will (Prov. 16, 33). — *Kirkpatrick*. As the result of the lot was regarded as a divine decision, not only was Saul to be credited by this act in the sight of the whole nation as the king appointed by the Lord, but he himself was also to be more fully assured of the certainty of his own election on the part of God. — *Keil*.

21. **Family of Matri.** — Not mentioned among the families of Benjamin in Num. 26 : 38-41 ; but probably a new family that arose in Benjamin after the tribal war. — *Terry*. **Saul . . . was taken.** — In the words "*Saul the son of Kish was taken*," the historian proceeds at once to the

and Saul the son of Kish was taken: and when they sought him he could not be found.

22. Therefore they inquired of the Lord further, if the man should yet come thither. And the Lord answered, Behold, he hath hid among the stuff.

23. And they ran and fetched him thence: and when he stood among the people, he^s was higher than any of the people from his shoulders and upward.

24. And Sam'u-el said to all the people, See ye him whom the Lord hath chosen, that

^s Chap. 9 : 2.

final result of the casting of the lots, without describing the intermediate results any further. — *Keil*. He could not be found. — Saul knew from his former interview with Samuel what the result of this casting of lots would be, and probably a feeling of mingled reserve, timidity, and embarrassment led him to hide himself. — *Terry*.

22. They inquired of the Lord. — The technical phrase for ascertaining God's will by means of the Urim and Thummin in the breastplate upon the High-priest's Ephod (Ex. 28 : 30 ; Num. 27 : 21). — *Kirkpatrick*. It must be looked on as a different act from the preceding casting of lots. If the man should yet come thither. — The question was: *Has any one else come hither?* that is, besides those here present, among whom Saul was not to be found. The "one" (lit. "man") refers to the *one* who could not be found; the oracle is to give information as to his presence or absence. — *Erdmann*. Among the stuff — *utensils, vessels*; that is, the travelling baggage of the assembled people. — *Terry*.

23. He was higher than any of the people from his shoulders. — By which it would appear that he could not have been much less than seven feet high. Great stress is laid upon this, because this distinguished stature, with the impression of bodily prowess which it conveyed, helped much to recommend him to the choice of the people. When from long peace there was no man of distinguished renown among the people; and when in battle much less depended upon military skill than upon bodily prowess of the chief in single combats, or in partial actions with which most battles commenced — it was natural enough that the people take pride in the gigantic proportions of their leader, as calculated to strike terror into the enemy and confidence into his followers; besides that it was no mean advantage that the crest of their leader should, from his tallness, be seen from afar by his people. The prevalence of this feeling of regard for personal bulk and stature is seen in the Scriptures of ancient Egypt, Assyria, and Persia, and even in the modern paintings of the last named nation, in which the sovereign is invested with gigantic proportions in comparison with the persons around him. — *Kitto*.

24. See ye him whom the Lord hath chosen. — By which words Samuel expressly declares the *election* by lot to be a *confirmation* of the previous divine choice, and complete the formal *presentation* of Saul as the divinely-appointed king, and then adds as proof: **There is none like him among all the people.** — There are *two factors* which, according to this account, co-operated to call forth the people's cry of

there is none like him among all the people? And all the people shouted, and said, God save the king.

25. Then Sam'u-el told the people the manner of the kingdom, and wrote it in a book, and laid it up before the

Lord. And Sam'u-el sent all the people away, every man to his house.

26. And Saul also went home to Gib'e-ah;⁷ and there went with him a band of men, whose hearts God had touched.

27 But the children of Be'-

⁷ Chap. 11 : 4.

salutation and homage, God save the king. The testimony of Samuel. "This is the king chosen by the Lord," granted in spite of the fact that their demand, proceeding from a vain, haughty, and unfaithful mind, was not well-pleasing to him, and the immediate impression made by *Saul's person*, which was in keeping with the kingly dignity. — *Erdmann.*

25. **The manner of the kingdom.** — A charter establishing and defining the position of the king in relation to Jehovah and to the people. It must be distinguished from the "manner of the king" in 2:11 ff., which describes the arbitrary exactions of an oriental despot. — *Kirkpatrick.* There is a manifest reference to Deut. 17:15-20, in which the law of the kingdom is clearly laid down. It is not improbable that what Samuel wrote was simply a transcript of Deut. 17:14-20. — *Cook.* **Wrote it in a book, and laid it up before the Lord.** — *Lit. in the book.* Possibly this important charter was added to "the book of the law" kept by the side of the ark "before the Lord" (Deut. 31:26). — *Kirkpatrick.* **Samuel sent all the people away.** — The technical word for *dismissing*. Notwithstanding this public and solemn investment of Saul with the royal dignity and authority, Samuel continues to be the highest director of the affairs of the people; the now established kingdom retires passively into the background before Samuel's Prophetic-Judicial Office, which retains its full activity and authority. This is indicated by the fact that it is not Saul, but Samuel that finally *dismisses the people*. — *Erdmann.*

26. **Gibeah, a hill**, the native place of Saul. It was four miles north of the present Jerusalem, and two miles south of Samuel's village of Ramah. — *Geike.* **There went with him a band of men.** — As an escort of honor and esteem. **Whose hearts God had touched.** — Who had been peculiarly affected by the scenes of the election they had witnessed at Mizpeh, and who were inwardly drawn by the divine influence to love and admire the new sovereign. — *Terry.*

27. **Children of Belial.** — *Certain worthless fellows.* Our translators have wrongly treated this word as a proper name in the historical books, but not elsewhere, though the alternative is generally given in the margin. It means *worthlessness*, and according to the usual Hebrew idiom *a son or daughter of worthlessness* signifies "a worthless man or woman," and with a positively bad sense, a lawless, ungodly, wicked person. If "naughty," by which the word is rendered in Prov. 6:12, had retained its archaic sense, it would be a fair equivalent. "Belial," or more correctly "Beliar," is used by St. Paul in 2 Cor. 6:15 as a name of Satan, the personification of all lawlessness and worthlessness. — *Kirkpatrick.*

li-al⁸ said, How shall this man save us? And they despised him, and brought him no presents.⁹ But he held his peace.

⁸ Deut. 13:13; 2 Chron. 13:7.

⁹ 2 Sam. 8:2; 1 Kings 4:21; 10:25; 2 Chron. 17:5; Ps. 72:10.

Brought him no presents. — The marginal references here show how uniform a custom it was for persons to show their obedience or respect to one of the high positions, particularly to a king, by bringing him a present. To neglect such token of honor would be to treat a monarch with contempt. **He held his peace.** — Literally, *he was as being deaf*. He maintained a prudent reserve, deeming it inexpedient and unwise to begin his reign by using his royal power to crush a few worthless fellows, who were unworthy at present of so much attention. But while, perhaps, only a few were outspoken in their disloyalty, it seems from what followed that there was quite a widespread disaffection; and Saul's public inauguration and solemn consecration as the Lord's anointed were reserved for a more suitable occasion. — *Terry*.

ANALYSIS AND EXPOSITION.

Introduction. — The people of Israel had not long to wait for their king. Very shortly after Samuel's interview with the elders he was informed by the Most High that on the morrow the promised king would be sent to him to be anointed at his hands. On the next day, accordingly, Saul was brought into the presence of the prophet. This was accomplished through the instrumentality of one of the simplest incidents of everyday life. Saul with his servant had been unsuccessfully traversing the country in quest of his father's asses, which had strayed. Weary of the search he was about to return home. Then his servant suggested that they should consult the prophet, and Saul, adopting the suggestion, found himself face to face with Samuel. As Saul drew near the Divine voice assured the prophet that he was the destined king. Samuel told him that he might lay aside all further anxiety about his father's asses, for they were found, and invited him to accompany him to the sacrificial feast, set him in the best place, and bade him partake of a special portion which had been reserved for him. The feast over, Samuel took Saul to his house, where he spent the night in communion with the prophet. In the morning they went out from the town together (9:1-27). When they were alone the prophet, taking a vial of oil, poured it upon Saul's head, kissed him, and assured him he was chosen by God to be the first king of Israel (v. 1). To this assurance he added prophetic intimations of certain incidents which would occur on Saul's return homewards, a promise that the Spirit of the Lord should come upon him and he should prophesy and "be turned into another man," and an injunction that, when these signs were fulfilled, he should do as occasion served him, for God was with him. After making an appointment to meet him at Gilgal, Samuel sent the young man on his way. "And it was so,

that when he had turned his back to go from Samuel, God gave him another heart: and all those signs came to pass that day" (vs. 2-16).

This is a suggestive bit of history. It reveals God as the Supreme Power and Guide of life. Though Israel has rejected him, he still controls their destiny. It is he who selects the man who is to be their king. He works out his purpose by means of ordinary events. So God is the controller of our destiny—the guide of our lives. It was a trivial event by which the future of Saul was shaped, and casual as trivial. Simply the loss of some asses which Saul happened to go in search of. We little know how potently the small events of everyday life touch our destinies. Nothing in life is really trivial. We call things so, but it is because we only measure their visible appearance and not their unseen influence. God takes hold of all the casualties of life, and makes them work the purposes of his will. How he links the separate events of life! He joined the lost asses to Israel's desire for a king, and made the one subservient to the other.

Saul did not go before God had prepared him, neither did he refuse to go after that preparation was completed. There appears to have been three steps from his humble home to his kingly throne. There was a secret designation to the office by God through Samuel; an inward preparation for it by the Spirit of God; and an outward call to it by the voice of the people. Whether any secret voice had spoken to Saul before Samuel addressed him we cannot tell. If he had received any inward impression with reference to it, the narrative gives no indication of it. Taking the history as it stands, the first thing is the secret designation by God through Samuel. We have seen how naturally they met without either seeking the other. Providence brought them together without any ado. The young man went on a very humble errand, quite unsuspectingly. In the way of duty he met with dignity. From one of the byways of life God guided him to his high destiny. He went out to seek stray asses and found a kingdom. Let us not expect the Almighty to make so very much ado about us. Unless something almost equal to a heavenly voice, like that which appealed to Saul of Tarsus, calls from the heavens many decline to listen. The "still, small voice" is not enough; the summons must be as a thunder peal ere it can be obeyed. This is all wrong. We have heard the secret invitation in the silence of the soul; we have been spoken to by some Samuel whose finger has pointed in the line of our duty. Let that suffice. It will suffice when that happens to us which happened to Saul,—an influx of divine power, a breath of the Most High passing through us like an electric current. "And the Spirit of God came upon" Saul. That was the most important element in his preparation for his high office. The effect of such heavenly preparation is free and spontaneous earthly work. Samuel had said: "When these signs are come unto thee, thou shalt do as occasion serve thee, for God is with thee." He was not to ex-

pect power for service until the divine grace had visited him; but after that he was to use his opportunities, to be ready to enter providential openings, to embrace such service as might present itself, nothing doubting. The God-visited man is to be generous, enterprising, spontaneous, free. The natural outcome of heavenly inspiration is spontaneity of action; "as occasion serve thee." Lawfully constituted authority must be respected, but it cannot take cognizance of everything. "Do the next duty," said the old proverb, and it might have added, without waiting to be told. All around us the hosts of evil gather, and blessed be any man who can smite them down, whether he do it in the routine way or not. Spontaneous action, vigorous individuality, well harmonized with collective unity, is the crying want of our day. "As occasion serve thee." Occasions wait. O, for men to use them! The third step—Saul's outward call by the voice of the people—is the subject of our lesson.

Lesson Topics.—I. God's message to the People. II. The Choice of a King.

I. GOD'S MESSAGE TO THE PEOPLE (vs. 17-19).—"Samuel called the people together unto the Lord to Mizpeh," that the sacred lot might confirm in their presence the divine choice which had been already revealed to the prophet, and by him to Saul. Before proceeding, Samuel delivers a message from the Most High to the people. They were not allowed to misunderstand or overlook the real character of the enterprise in which they were engaged. In this message two things are put in contrast :—

1. *God's goodness to Israel.* "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I brought up Israel out of Egypt, and delivered you out of the hands of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all kingdoms, and of them that oppressed you" (v. 18). This statement sweeps their whole history as a people. It would remind them of many a thrilling memorial of Jehovah's outstretched arm, in the wonders of the Exodus, amid the wanderings of the wilderness, in the perils of the conquest, during all the years since the death of Joshua, — years in which they had taxed the forbearance and long-suffering of their God to the utmost over and over again, and yet were forgiven, and delivered as often as they turned to him for help. This allusion to their past ought to have reminded them how often God had delivered them from imminent peril, from national ruin, and even from slavery, and brought them in submission and penitence to his feet. If the remembrance of such mercies failed to produce this effect, it is hard to think what would. It is right and wise to recall the deliverances of the past and gather up the mercies which we have received at the hand of God, that we may be moved to a penitent and grateful consecration of ourselves to him.

2. *Israel's rejection of God.* "And ye have this day rejected your God," etc. (v. 19). Here was sounded in the national ear at once its crime and folly. To reject that Being who had

himself saved them out of all their adversities and their tribulations, and who had only to withdraw himself from them to insure their speedy and complete ruin! Yet just this criminal folly they wilfully committed. It was not a mere frantic impulse that had taken possession of the national heart. It was a matter of fixed purpose, pursued in opposition to many and urgent entreaties, numerous and solemn warnings, and constant communications from God as to the ultimate issue. Nor did they try to conceal the criminality of their request by any pretext or excuse. So fixed was their determination that they met all opposition by urging to the end their bare request, "Nay, but set a king over us." Thus Israel, in Mizpeh, with all its grand old memories, renounces the God of its hope and the fountain of its strength.

This contrast between the goodness of God and the conduct of the people brings out the ingratitude of the latter in the strongest light. Their whole history was full of the loving kindness of the Lord, and they now openly reject his future help. What ingratitude thus to deny him who had been their refuge. It is universally conceded to be right for a man to love his benefactor; no effort would be considered too arduous, no reasonable sacrifice too great, to repay his kindness—if only that benefactor be a man like himself. Men are less careful of the claims of the Father of Lights from whom cometh every good and every perfect gift. But surely if ingratitude to a human benefactor rightly exposes one to the burning contempt of his fellows, ingratitude to the good God must be more heinous and hateful. Israel's unthankfulness is not the less criminal and contemptible because God and not man is its object, and neither is yours nor mine. The mercies of our God should lead us to hearty repentance, childlike faith, loving obedience, and ceaseless thanksgiving. For reasons which were partially brought to view in the exposition of the last lesson, Israel's rejection of God was tolerated, and hence the divine message concludes with a call to assemble for the public recognition of the new king. "Now, therefore, present yourselves before the Lord by your tribes, and by your thousands."

II. THE PUBLIC CHOICE OF A KING (vs. 20-27).—The choice was made by means of the sacred lot. This was not unusual among the Israelites. This method would leave no ground for complaint against the decision. All are placed on the same level, and possess an equal chance for the new office. Thus it would appear to the people; as a matter of fact there was no chance about it. God had chosen Saul, and had made known the fact to him through Samuel. Yet there was just as much chance in this matter as there is in the affairs of our lives. However it may seem to us, their disposition is in the hands of God. On the application of the lot, the small tribe of Benjamin—a tribe made smaller by the fearful scenes narrated in Judges 20 and 21—was taken. And afterward, in a similar manner, the family of Matri, and Saul the son of Kish, were selected. What had gone before, like all discipline of life, was

simply a matter between Saul and his God. Hence Samuel permits the people to remain in ignorance of their king's prior history, and proceeds as if nothing had occurred. That private discipline was necessary to the preparation of Saul for his office, and this public choice by lot was necessary to complete the satisfaction of the people. Had this method not been adopted, and had Saul been made king merely upon the grounds of his previous training, there would have been room for a suspicion of favoritism, and danger that the people would rebel against him.

Saul was the chosen king. "And when they sought him, he could not be found." For himself he knew beforehand what the issue would be. Shrinking from the responsibility, he had concealed himself among the baggage brought together by the assembled thousands of Israel. This modest diffidence becomes him. It shows the effectiveness of the divine discipline through which Saul had passed. Few men would run from royal honors. But Saul was evidently thinking more about the responsibility than the honor of the office. It is a not uncommon weakness of men, when called to prominent position, to exhibit a mock modesty, and hide themselves behind the stuff, while they take good care to get where there are plenty of openings through which they may be seen. Saul's was genuine modesty, such as we should all cultivate and cherish. Matthew Henry quaintly says: "None will be losers at last by their humility and modesty. Honor, like the shadow, follows those who flee from it, but flees from those who pursue it." Saul was found and brought forth from his hiding-place. When his noble form appeared the people greeted him with the shout, then heard for the first time among the tribes, "God save the King," thus testifying to the nation's acceptance of its new ruler. Israel stood committed to the new form of government unconditionally. But the prudent Samuel not only expounded to them the laws of the kingdom (Deut. 17: 14-20), prepared against this very hour, he also wrote "the manner of the kingdom" "in a book, and laid it up before the Lord." Then he sent the people away. Saul soon began to experience the consequences of promotion. He returned to his home, but to a different life. Many sympathized with him, and this would count for more now than ever before. He incurred the envy and enmity of others. Thus his character was tested. He stood the test; his conduct was discreet and dignified. We may not hope to occupy any position of usefulness and honor without incurring the envy of little souls. In such a case let us, like Saul, hold our peace, nor allow ourselves to be for one moment diverted from our work.

Nov. 4, 1883.]

LESSON V.

[1 SAM. 12: 13-25.]

SAMUEL'S FAREWELL ADDRESS.

GOLDEN TEXT. — "Only fear the Lord, and serve him in truth with all your heart; for consider how great things he hath done for you." — Verse 24.

TIME. — B.C. 1095. **PLACE.** — Gilgal.

LESSON-TEXT AND NOTES.

13. Now therefore behold the king whom ye have chosen, *and* whom ye have desired! and, behold, the¹ Lord hath set a king over you.

¹ Hosea 13: 11.

14. If² ye will fear the Lord and serve him, and obey his voice, and not rebel against the commandment of the Lord, then shall both ye and

² Josh. 24: 14, 20; Ps. 81: 12-15.

13. Now, therefore, behold the king . . . whom ye have desired. — The choice of Saul as king, privately made by God through Samuel, and publicly confirmed by the election at Mizpeh, had received an unmistakable ratification in his victory over Nahash (ch. 11: 1-11). — *Kirkpatrick*. This great victory rallied the nation round Saul as one man, and Samuel deemed it a fit occasion to summon the people once more to Gilgal, and there renew the kingdom (11: 14, 15). Accordingly, after the sacrifice of peace offerings and amidst great rejoicings, Saul, who had been tried and not found wanting, was again inaugurated in his regal functions, while Samuel embraced the opportunity of bidding farewell to the people he had ruled so prudently (ch. 12: 1-25). — *Maclear*. **The Lord hath set a king over you.** — In concluding his address to the assembled heads of the nation, Samuel presents to them Saul, whom in Jehovah's name he had previously anointed to be king: but while stating that they had obtained the object of their ardent desire, he reminded them that "the Lord had set a king over them," i. e. that he was, in the theoretic government of the Hebrews, the representative and viceregent of Jehovah. — *J. F. & B.*

14. If ye will fear, etc. — Better, "If ye will fear Jehovah, and serve him, and obey his voice, and not rebel against the commandment of Jehovah, and both ye and also the king who reigneth over you continue following after Jehovah, your God [it shall be well with you], but if," etc. The apodosis must be supplied from the context, as in Ex. 32: 32. — *Kirkpatrick*. Samuel here, in keeping with the importance of the moment and the emotion of his own heart, heaps together in most eloquent fashion the demands which are to be made on religious moral life in view of the conditions of true well-being for the people and their king in the new order of things, to fear the Lord, serve Him, hearken to his voice, not rebel against His word (comp. Deut 1: 26, "rebel against the mouth [commandment] of the Lord") and continue following Him, or, remain in His retinue true to Him. This expression corresponds completely to

also the king that reigneth over you continue following the Lord your God.

15. But if ye will not obey the voice of the Lord, but rebel against the commandment of the Lord, then³ shall the hand of the Lord be against you, as *it was*⁴ against your fathers.

16. Now therefore stand and see this great thing, which the Lord will do before your eyes.

³ Lev. 26:14, etc.

⁴ James 5:16-18.

17. *Is it not wheat harvest to-day?* I will⁵ call unto the Lord and he shall send thunder and rain; that ye may perceive and see that your wickedness is great, which ye have done in the sight of the Lord in asking you a king.

18. So Sam'u-el called unto the Lord; and the Lord sent thunder and rain that day; and⁶ all the people greatly feared the Lord and Sam'u-el.

⁵ Ver. 9.

⁶ Ex. 14:31; Ezra 10:9.

the thought underlying this exhortation, namely, that the Lord, in spite of Israel's rejection of Him by the demand for an earthly-human king, is and remains the King of his people (vs. 12, 13). — *Erdmann*.

15. The contrast: **But if ye will not.** — (from the preceding are recapitulated only the two traits of *obedience* to the word of the Lord, and *not rebelling* against His commandment) — **then shall the hand of the Lord be against you, as it was against your fathers.** — This comparative addition looks to the words from v. 7 to v. 12, wherein is pointed out how the fathers had brought on themselves by sin and defection the oppression of the enemy, in which the hand of the Lord was heavy on them, and from which the people now hoped to be delivered by the king. At bottom the defection of the fathers and the demand for a king who was to deliver from oppressions sent by God for their sins, are one and the same wrong against the Lord. Therefore Samuel wishes by his earnest warning to lead them to repentance. — *Erdmann*.

16. **Stand and see, notice, attend to. This great thing,** the sign Samuel was about to give. — *Grey*. This unusual occurrence. — *Clarke*.

17. **Is it not wheat harvest to-day?** — This question signifies that at that season (in May or June) rain was unusual. — *Erdmann*. **He shall send thunder and rain.** — In ordinary seasons from the cessation of the showers in spring [about the end of April] until their commencement in October or November, rain never falls, and the sky is usually serene. — *Robinson*. "Rain in harvest" served as a figure for what was unseemly and anomalous (Prov. 26:1). — *Kirkpatrick*. **That ye may perceive . . . your wickedness.** — They were now rejoicing before God, in and with their king (ch. 11:15) and offering to God the sacrifices of praise which they hoped God would accept of; and this perhaps made them think that there was no harm in their asking a king, but really they had done well in it; therefore Samuel here charges it upon them as their sin, as wickedness, *great wickedness in the sight of the Lord*. — *M. Henry*.

18. **All the people greatly feared the Lord and Samuel.** Compare the very similar phrase, Exod. 14:31. — *Cook*. "*And Samuel*" is added because he, as before by his word, so by his introduction of this

19. And all the people said unto Sam'u-el, Pray⁷ for thy servants unto the Lord thy God, that we die not: for we have added unto all our sins *this* evil, to ask us a king.

20. And Sam'u-el said unto the people, Fear not: ye have done all this wickedness: yet⁸ turn not aside from following

the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart.

21. And turn ye not aside: for *then should ye go* after vain things, which⁹ cannot profit nor deliver; for they are vain.¹⁰

22. For the Lord will not forsake¹¹ his people for¹² his great name's sake: because it

⁷ Ex. 9: 28; 10: 17; Isa. 26: 16; 1 John 5: 16.

⁸ Deut. 11: 16; Jer. 3: 1.

¹⁰ Hab. 2: 18.

¹¹ Lam. 3: 31, 32.

⁹ Jer. 16: 19; Jonah 2: 8.

¹² Ezek. 20: 9, 14.

manifestation, wonderful and contrary to the ordinary course of nature, of God's wrath, had displayed himself as instrument of the judicial power and glory of the God-king. — Erdmann.

19. **Pray for thy servants, etc.** — Samuel plays the same part as mediator which Moses did (Exod. 9: 28; 10: 17; 20: 19). — Cook. **That we die not.** — The presence of the holy and just God had made itself known to the people. Before Him the sinner cannot stand, His judgments must reach him. The "for" supplies the basis to the thought contained in what precedes, that they had deserved the punishment of the angry God. Their penitent confession is not merely the admission that they had asked a king, but *that they had added to all their sins this evil.* — Erdmann.

20. **Fear not, etc.** — Comp. Exod. 20: 20. **Ye have done, etc.** — Ye is emphatic, and would be best rendered in English by the addition of *indeed*. "*Ye have indeed done all this wickedness,*" etc. — Cook. To his consoling words Samuel adds (1) the reference to their sin, which, in order to retain them in wholesome, sorrowful repentance, he anew sets before them in its whole extent ("*ye have done all this wickedness*") and (2) the *exhortation, negative*: **Yet turn not aside from following the Lord; positive: serve the Lord with all your heart,** the undivided complete devotion of the heart, the innermost life to the Lord is inseparably connected with not turning aside from Him. — Erdmann.

21. **For then should ye go after vain things.** — The word "for" necessitates the insertion of a verb to complete the sentence. But it is expressed in none of the ancient versions, and the sense gains by the omission. Translate: "And ye shall not turn aside after vain things which cannot profit nor deliver." "Vain things" are false gods and idols, Heb. *tôhû*, literally, *emptiness*. The same word is applied to them in Is. 41: 29 (E. V. confusion), and to idol-makers in Is. 44: 9; cp. 1 Cor. 8: 4. — Kirkpatrick.

22. **For his great name's sake.** — Lest he should seem in the eyes of the heathen not to be such as He declares Himself to be, Almighty, True, Faithful. Compare the use of this plea by Moses (Ex. 32: 12; Num. 14: 23 ff.), and Joshua (Josh. 7: 9). See Rom. 11: 1, 2. — Kirkpatrick. **To make you his people.** — This embraces all God's deeds, by which He has established Israel in history as *His people*, the deeds of choice,

hath pleased the Lord to make you his people.

23. Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray¹³ for you; but I will teach you the good and the right way.

24. Only fear¹⁴ the Lord,

¹³ Col. 1:9.

¹⁴ Eccl. 12:13, 15.

¹⁵ Deut. 28:36.

and serve him in truth with all your heart; for consider how great things he hath done for you.

25. But if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both¹⁵ ye and your king.

deliverance out of Egypt, covenanting, introduction into the promised inheritance, preservation from enemies, — by these deeds He has glorified *His name*, which is the expression of all God's revelations, salvation, and power to His people. The *ground* of this is found simply in the *determination of the free, loving will of God* — comp. Deut. 7:6-12, which furnishes a complete parallel to the train of thought here. — *Erdmann*.

23. **God forbid that I should sin . . . in ceasing to pray for you.** — What a grandeur and sublime excellency of character and heart is indicated by this declaration. Though rejected by an ungrateful people, yet for them shall his prayers unceasingly ascend. To do otherwise would, in his mind, be to sin against Jehovah. — *Terry*. Sins of omission are apt to be too lightly regarded. The duty of intercessory prayer is one which rests upon all God's people. — *Elliot*. Along with this priestly mediation Samuel promises also his constant watch-care, which consists in showing the good and the right way, that is, the way of God. — *Erdmann*.

24. **How great things he hath done for you.** — Lit., *with you*. The reference can scarcely be limited to the recent storm as a display of God's greatness, but includes all His gracious dealings with His people. Samuel concludes his speech as he began it (v. 6, 7), with an appeal to these as the motive for loyal obedience. — *Kirkpatrick*.

25. **Ye shall be consumed, both ye and your king** — Mark the decree: By disobedience and sin even the Lord's anointed, as well as the chosen people, shall most certainly perish! Surely a most impressive warning with which to close the prophet's last public address to the assembled nation. — *Terry*.

ANALYSIS AND EXPOSITION.

Introduction. — The long-expressed wish of the Israelites is attained. The nation has entirely abandoned the old theocracy, having exchanged it for a monarchical form of government. Saul, who had been privately anointed king, having passed through a preparatory discipline, has been publicly received as such by his compeers with mingled feelings of joy and envy, and had returned to his home in Gibeah. But though in form the people now have a king, there was need of other influences to place him high in public confidence and to give him the royal state of the monarch of Israel. Events soon occurred which hastened on these results. These events gave the new

king an opportunity to display in the eyes of the nation his ability and discretion as a military leader.

Nahash, the king of the Ammonites, invaded Israel. It would seem that this invasion was previously threatened, or had been some time in progress; for it is referred to by Samuel as one of the principal causes which led the elders at this time to demand a king (v. 12). This aggression, made by a people occupying the eastern frontier of the land, would necessarily, in the first instance, affect the trans-Jordanic tribes. Of these territories the Ammonite king selected Jabesh-Gilead, to which he laid siege. The people of that place, in their alarm, offered to make a covenant with him, which he declined, except on condition that he might put out their right eyes, and so render them unfit for service in war. In this strait they requested a respite for seven days, promising to submit even to these conditions unless they were relieved in that time. In the meantime they sent messengers to all the coasts of Israel imploring assistance. When this information reached Gibeah, Saul, who had returned to his ordinary pursuits, was in the field attending to his flocks. On coming in he found the people weeping at the distressing news which they had received. While he listened to the sad account, the Spirit of the Lord fell upon him, and he instantly slew a yoke of oxen, hewed them in pieces, and sent this war-token through all the tribes. This summons was so promptly and generally obeyed that he found himself at the head of a great army in time to afford the requisite aid to the men of Jabesh-Gilead. Inexperienced in war as the new king was at this time, he showed by the manner in which he directed the attack on the host of the Ammonites that he lacked neither skill nor courage. He informed his distressed brethren that on the morrow they should have help; and they sent a message to the king of the Ammonites which threw him off his guard; while Saul, dividing his men into three companies, fell upon the enemy by surprise and completely defeated and destroyed them. Elevated and flushed with this great victory, the friends of Saul demanded that the men who had despised him on his accession should be put to death. But the king, most discreetly, refused, declaring that as the Lord had saved Israel no man's life should be taken away (11: 1-13).

Samuel, who had accompanied this expedition, and who was an eye-witness of Saul's prudence and valor, proposed that all Israel should repair to Gilgal, and confirm him in possession of the kingdom. This spot was regarded as sacred. It was the first resting-place of the ark after passing Jordan, and was the place where Israel covenanted anew to serve Jehovah. Here, again, we are told, "they made Saul king." Josephus says that Samuel here anointed Saul a second time. Nor does this appear at all improbable, though the circumstance is not mentioned in the Hebrew text; for the first anointing was a private transaction, and he was not anointed when elected by lot. We have the same double anointing in the case of David (1 Sam. 16: 13; 2 Sam. 5: 3). From this time, therefore, Saul may be regarded

as the recognized sovereign of Israel (11: 14-15). Samuel embraced the opportunity afforded by this assembly at Gilgal to bid farewell to the people he had ruled so long and so prudently.

Lesson Topics.—I. Instruction. II. Warning. III. Encouragement.

I. INSTRUCTION (vs. 13, 14).—This is the last recorded instance on which the aged prophet appeared publicly before the nation. Saul's throne was now secure, and Samuel might safely complete the surrender of his authority and retire into privacy. But before he did so he stood up once more among the assembled tribes, and with calm and collected dignity made his farewell address to them. He commenced by pointing out the completeness with which he had given effect to their wishes in setting a king over them, although avowedly in opposition to his better judgment: "And now, behold, the king walketh before you, and I am old and gray-headed; and behold my sons are with you; and I have walked before you from my childhood unto this day" (vs. 1, 2). All the parties concerned were there, the king in the fulness of his power; the people, triumphant in the apparent sanction to their judgment which the late victory under the new king afforded; Samuel's sons, of whom they were jealous, present, like themselves, as subjects of Saul; and the prophet himself, too old to be expected much longer to exercise any remaining control over the movements of the government. In the strength of conscious integrity he appealed to the whole assembly, as in the sight of the Lord and their anointed king, to bear witness to the unswerving rectitude of his administration. His whole life from childhood onward was before them. He had grown gray in their service. What single crime could they charge him with? They instantly and cordially recognized the integrity of his government (vs. 3-5). Samuel was not only the last of the judges, he was also the first of the prophets. Having thus appealed to the people concerning his past life as he was laying down his authority as judge, he now addresses them concerning their future with the unimpaired authority of a prophet. There were two errors into which they were especially liable to fall at this time, and from them Samuel would save them. They would be likely to think that because the Lord had not openly expressed his displeasure, and had permitted his prophet to be the instrument in establishing the monarchy and inaugurating the king, their conduct had been well-pleasing in his sight. Then they were exposed to the temptation to put their trust in Saul instead of God, to feel their need of dependence on the unseen King, because they had a visible head to look to. On these points the instruction of the prophet is clear and forcible. He took a rapid review of the past history of the nation, enumerating their past deliverances, and showing how, in all their emergencies, God had raised up a champion to rescue them (vs. 6-11). Yet, notwithstanding all this, when a new danger threatened, instead of turning to the Lord, who had wrought such merciful wonders in their behalf,

"ye said to me, nay; but a king shall reign over us; when the Lord your God was your King" (v. 12). Thus was their disobedience and ingratitude to their Divine King exposed. His anger could not be appeased and their punishment averted save by most faithful service, both on the part of the monarch and the people. But such service would secure the divine favor. In other words, the prophet reiterates the lesson of all their history, that thier national well-being and happiness depended on their loyalty to God (v. 14). Here Samuel lays down the necessary and unalterable condition on which the well-being of nations and individuals depends everywhere and always. This condition is loyal submission and obedience to God. Here it is called "the fear of the Lord," the New Testament equivalent of which is "the love of God." This holy fear of God has nothing slavish in it, but while it delivers us from all base and earthly fear, is, in itself, so joined with confidence and love that it does but sober our hearts without making them unhappy. He who thus fears God will be free from all other fear in the world. That one most saving and most holy fear, the dread of his displeasure, the dread of not having him for our friend and our Saviour, frees us of necessity from all fear besides. Nothing can in anywise hurt us, for we thus belong to God, and "they who fear him lack nothing" (Psa. 34: 9), nothing in earth or heaven, in life or in death, in time or in eternity.

II. WARNING (vs. 15-19).—"But if ye will not obey the voice of the Lord, but rebel against the commandments of the Lord, then shall the hand of the Lord be against you, as it was against your fathers" (v. 15). As surely as their obedience to God would secure their well-being, their disobedience would be their ruin. The fact that they now had a king would not secure them against the divine judgments. They had made themselves in this matter "like the nations," but the dispensation of forbearance exercised in the case of these nations would not be extended to cover them. They were still, with all their rejection of God, his covenant people, and with their privileges came solemn responsibilities. If they rebelled the hand of the Lord would be against them as it was against their fathers. This warning would call up to their minds all the sufferings of their nation under the judgments of God, and put all the weight of their past history into the prophet's stern words. "We mistake if we think we can evade God's justice by shaking off his dominion. If God shall not rule us, yet he will judge us."

In confirmation of his words, and to awaken the people to a realization of their position before God, the sign of a thunderstorm at the unusual time of wheat harvest was sent in answer to Samuel's prayer. This storm, coming at the call of the prophet, would have been miraculous, and, therefore, impressive, at any season of the year. But its effect upon the people would be greatly heightened by its occurrence at this time. From the cessation of the showers of spring till their commencement in October or November rain was unknown. This sign from heaven was designed to recall their sin in asking for a king.

But it was not destructive. It was the divine confirmation and reassertion of the solemn warnings already uttered in connection with this sin. Its great purpose was to put the people on their guard against those sins to which they would be especially exposed under the new order of things. They were greatly terrified, and, with the strongest confidence in Samuel's prayers, begged his continued intercession on their behalf, adding also an acknowledgment of their sin in the matter of requesting a king.

III. ENCOURAGEMENT (vs. 20-25).—There is but a step from presumption to despair. Samuel saw the danger the people were in of imagining that all was lost, and that they had sinned beyond the possibility of restoration. In his reply, therefore, he encourages them by the assurance that, grievously as they have sinned, their case was not desperate. If from this time they would be true to God all would yet be well. Though they have sinned often and terribly, yet even now they have only to turn to the Lord and cleave to him in order to experience his forgiving mercy. Samuel rests this assurance, not on the merit or even the penitence of the people, but on the Lord's regard for his own great name (v. 22), for he had committed himself to mercy toward this people. The aged prophet further encourages the people with the assurance that he would not cease to pray for them (v. 23). Samuel was a child of prayer, and prayer was his strength all his days. These Israelites, thoughtless and godless as they were, valued his intercession. To intercede for others is the privilege of the good man. It were useless to ask the prayers of those who are living at enmity with God. They neither would nor could comply with the request. They *would* not because they have no disposition to prayer and no sympathy with spiritual experiences and needs; they *could* not because they have no warrant for doing so. They may pray for themselves but not for others. But the reconciled children of God may intercede, for they are constituted "priests unto God." Intercession is an established principle in God's method of governing his spiritual universe. As in the physical system he lights one world by another, and sustains one life by another; so in the moral he blesses one spirit by another. Intercession is the highest function of prayer; it is the devoutest breath of benevolence; it is the soul losing itself in its interest for others as the soaring eagle loses her eyrie in the sun.

In concluding his address Samuel is careful to remind his hearers that his prayers will not avail to bring blessing, apart from the condition of well-being, which he has already announced and which he now repeats. "But I will teach you the good and the right way: only fear the Lord and serve him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great things he hath done for you. But if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed both ye and your king." All the prayers of all the good men of earth and all the saints in heaven, even the intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ himself, cannot avail to bring blessing and well-being to one who will not observe this condition.

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE PACIFIC SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
25 RELIGION

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LESSON VI.

[1 SAM. 15:12-26.]

SAUL REJECTED.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice."—Verse 22.

TIME.—B.C. 1079. **PLACE.**—Gilgal.

LESSON-TEXT AND NOTES.

12. And when Sam'u-el rose early to meet Saul in the morning, it was told Sam'u-el, saying, Saul came to Carmel,¹ and, behold, he set him up a place, and is gone about, and passed on, and gone down to Gil'gal.

13. And Sam'u-el came to Saul, and Saul said unto him,

¹ 1 Kings 18:42.

12. **When Samuel rose early.**—(See v. 11.) The word of Jehovah had declared to the prophet that mysterious change in the divine purpose which is so often expressed by one striking word: "It *repenteth* me that I have set up Saul to be king." The old man's affection for Saul overflowed in tears and cries of prayer all the night, but in the morning he rose up to fulfil his hard commission. No interview recorded in history has a deeper moral significance. — *Wm. Smith.* **Carmel.**—This was one of the cities of Judah (Josh. 15:55), and has been identified with the modern Kurmul, six miles south of Hebron. **Set him up a place.**—That is, say some, for the purpose of giving his army rest and dividing the spoils. The Vulgate translates, *He erected for himself a triumphal arch.* But the word translated *place* means *a hand*, and is used of Absalom's pillar (2 Sam. 18:18). Such is the meaning here. Saul erected at Carmel a monument as a memorial of his victory over the Amalekites. It may have been an elevated hand, serving as an index to attract the attention of the passing traveller. — *Terry.* **To Gilgal.**—In the same place where Saul's kingdom had been confirmed it was to be taken from him; and where the warning of the consequences of disobedience had been uttered (13:13, 14) the sentence on disobedience was to be pronounced. — *Kirkpatrick.*

13. **Blessed be thou of the Lord.**—A form of salutation. See Gen. 14:19; Judg. 17:2; Ruth 3:10. — *Cook.* Elated with his victory, and resolved to brave out the voice of conscience, Saul meets Samuel with affected pleasure, and anticipates inquiry by claiming the praise of a duty well discharged. **I have performed, etc.**—He was commanded to destroy Amalek utterly (v. 3). Agag, their king or sheikh, was taken prisoner; but all the rest of the people were put to death, clearly showing that Saul was not moved to disobedience by any feeling of humanity. There can be no doubt that Agag was spared to add splendor to Saul's triumphant return, as a king making war for himself rather than as the servant of Jehovah. The spoil was dealt with in like manner; and here the people shared the sin, sparing all the best of the cattle and all that

Blessed² be thou of the Lord; I have³ performed the commandment of the Lord.

14. And Sam'u-el said, What *meaneth* then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?

15. And Saul said, They have brought them from the A-mal'-

e-kites: for⁴ the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed.

16. Then Sam'u-el said unto Saul, Stay, and I will tell thee what the Lord hath said to me this night, and he said unto him, Say on.

² Judg. 17 : 2.

³ Prov. 28 : 13 ; 30 : 13.

⁴ Vs. 9, 21.

was valuable, and destroying all that was vile and refuse. It was doubtless true in part, as Saul afterwards declared, that he would have offered some of the cattle in sacrifice to God; but the chief motive in sparing them was clearly to enrich his followers with the spoil. — *Wm. Smith.*

14. **What meaneth, then, this bleating of the sheep, etc.** — Saul is convicted of falsehood by the voices of the animals which he had spared contrary to God's command. Samuel's mode of citing them against him by the question: "*What mean these voices?*" has an air of holy humor and cutting irony. — *Erdmann.* It is no new thing for the plausible professions and protestations of hypocrites to be contradicted and disproved by the most plain and undeniable evidence. Many boast of their obedience to the command of God; but what mean, then, their indulgence of the flesh, their love of the world, their passion and uncharitableness, and their neglect of holy duties, which witness against them? — *M. Henry.*

15. **The people spared the best of the sheep.** — He lays the fault upon the people, and thereby criminally insinuates that the thing was done against his will. **The Lord thy God.** — These words, in this connection, are full of significance. They seem to have flowed from a desire to compliment Samuel on the honor and sanctity of his personal intercourse with Jehovah, and also from a feeling that Jehovah was not his own God. — *Terry.* Every word uttered by Saul seems to indicate the breaking down of his moral character. There is something thoroughly mean in his attempt to shift the responsibility of what was done from his own kingly shoulders to those of the people. One feels that after the scene so forcibly described in this chapter, Saul must have forfeited his own self-respect, and that his downward career was henceforth almost inevitable. — *Cook.*

16. **Then Samuel said, etc.** — The way in which Samuel now seems thoroughly to acquiesce in the wisdom and justice of the sentence which (v. 11) he had so strenuously resisted at first is very striking. What before was known only to the Searcher of Hearts had now been displayed to Samuel by Saul himself. Samuel's grief and disappointment at this lamentable break-down in the character of one in whom he was so deeply interested is most impressive. We may learn from hence to put implicit trust in the wisdom and justice of all God's judgments. — *Cook.* **Stay.** — **Forbear!** Cease these flimsy excuses! — *Kirkpatrick.* **This night.** —

17. And Sam'u-el said, When thou wast little ⁵ in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Is'ra-el, and the Lord anointed thee king over Is'ra-el?

18. And the Lord sent thee on a journey, and said, Go and utterly destroy the sinners the A-mal'e-kites, and fight against them until they be consumed.

19. Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the Lord, but didst fly upon the

spoil, and didst evil in the sight of the Lord?

20. And Saul said unto Sam'u-el, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the Lord, and have gone the way which the Lord sent me, and have brought A'gag the king of Am'a-lek, and have utterly destroyed the A-mal'e-kites.

21. But ⁶ the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God in Gil'gal.

⁵ Chap. 9 : 21.

⁶ Ver. 15.

Gilgal was within fifteen miles of Ramah. Samuel might easily have come from Ramah that morning. — *Cook*.

17. **When thou wast little.** — *Is it not the case that though thou wast little in thine own eye, thou hast been made head of the tribes of Israel?* There is a reference to Saul's own words of astonishment that he should be chosen as king (9 : 21). The prophet desires to remind him that as his elevation came solely from God, obedience was due to God. — *Kirkpatrick*.

18. **The Lord sent thee on a journey, properly, a way, and said, Go, etc.** — It was a distinctly marked way which Saul was to go according to the Lord's command, "after him;" it was a divine mission which he was obediently completely to fulfil. **The sinners the Amalekites.** — These words give the reason why this people was to be destroyed and not spared, because they strove to annihilate God's people and kingdom. — *Erdmann*. The Amalekites, a Bedouin tribe, were the first heathen nation to attack the Israelites after their deliverance out of Egypt, which they did in the most treacherous manner on their journey from Egypt to Sinai; and they had been threatened by God with extermination in consequence. This Moses enjoined upon Joshua, and also committed to writing, for the Israelites to observe in all future generations (Exod. 17 : 8-16). — *Keil*.

19. **Didst fly upon the spoil.** — These words characterize Saul's conduct as based upon avarice. The "fly," as in 14 : 32, expresses eagerness, passionate craving. — *Erdmann*. There seems to be an obvious policy in this command to destroy all plunder, lest the Israelites should have been tempted to make marauding excursions upon their neighbors, and by degrees be trained up as an ambitious and conquering people. This danger the lawgiver clearly foresaw if they should fall under a monarchy. — *Milman*.

20, 21. **Yea, I have obeyed.** — Saul hardens himself still further : (1) in deceitful self-justification ; (2) in vain and hypocritical excuse. — *Erdmann*. **The chief of the things which should have been utterly**

22. And Sam'u-el said, Hath⁷ the Lord *as great* delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey *is*⁸ better than sacrifice, *and* to hearken than the fat of rams.

23. For rebellion *is as* the sin of witchcraft⁹ and stubbornness *is as* iniquity and idolatry.¹⁰ Because thou hast

rejected the word of the Lord, he¹¹ hath also rejected thee from *being* king.

24. And Saul said unto Sam'u-el, I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord, and thy words: because I feared¹² the people, and obeyed their voice.

⁷ Ps. 50 : 8, 9; 51 : 16, 17; Prov. 21 : 3; Isa. 1 : 11-17; Jer. 7 : 22, 23; Micah 6 : 6-8; Heb. 10 : 4-10.

⁸ Eccl. 5 : 1; Hosea 6 : 6; Mark 12 : 33.

⁹ Rev. 22 : 15.

¹⁰ 2 Cor. 6 : 16; Gal. 5 : 20; Rev. 21 : 8.

¹¹ Chap. 13 : 14.

¹² Ex. 23 : 2; Prov. 29 : 25; Isa. 51 : 12; Gal. 1 : 10.

destroyed. — *The chief of the devoted things.* It might seem a praiseworthy act to reserve the spoil for sacrifice; but since it was "devoted," it did not belong to the Israelites, and no offering could be made of it. — *Kirkpatrick.*

22. **Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice.** — Here Samuel proclaims that eternal principle of *moral duty* in condemnation of every attempt to propitiate God, and yet to retain our sin and have our own way. — *Wm. Smith.* With a burst of prophetic inspiration Samuel rends asunder Saul's tissue of excuses, and lays bare his sin. His words are the key-note of the long remonstrance of the prophets in subsequent ages against the too common error of supposing that external ceremonial can be of any value in the sight of God when separated from the true devotion of the worshipper's heart, which it symbolizes. See Ps. 40 : 6-8; 50 : 8 ff.; 51 : 16, 17; Is. 1 : 11-15; Jer. 6 : 20; Hos. 6 : 6; Amos. : 5:21-24; Micah 6 : 6-8; Matt. 9 : 13; 12 : 7. The rhythmical form of the original adds force and solemnity. — *Kirkpatrick.* In sacrifices a man offers only the strange flesh of irrational animals, whereas, in obedience he offers his own will, which is rational or spiritual worship. — *Berleburger Bible.* **Than the fat of rams.** — Than the choicest part of all the sacrifice, to wit, the fat, which was appropriated to God (Lev. 3 : 16), whereas, the offerer might partake of other parts of it. — *Pool.*

23. **Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, etc.** — Opposition to the will of God is as bad as divination by the help of evil spirits, which is tantamount to apostacy from God; obstinate resistance to him is no better than worshipping idols (*vanity* or *emptiness*) and images (*teraphim*). Disobedience is in fact idolatry, because it elevates self-will into a God. There seems to be an allusion to Saul's zeal in abolishing the practice of witchcraft (28 : 3). Samuel charges him with being not less guilty than those whom he had been so eager to condemn. — *Kirkpatrick.*

24. **I have sinned.** — And again the same words, v. 30 and v. 25 *pardon my sin.* How was it that these repeated confessions were unavailing to obtain forgiveness, when David's "I have sinned against the Lord," after a far more heinous offence, obtained the immediate answer, "The

25. Now therefore I pray thee, pardon my sin, and turn again with me, that I may worship the Lord.

26. And Sam'u-el said unto

Saul, I¹³ will not return with thee; for thou has rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord hath rejected thee from being king over Is'ra-el.

¹³ 2 John, 11.

Lord hath put away thy sin"? Doubtless it was that Soul only shrank from the *punishment* of his sin (25 : 30). David shrank in abhorrence from the sin itself. "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." — *Cook*.

25. **Turn again with me that I may worship the Lord.** — The erring but proud and obstinate monarch was not humbled. He was conscience-smitten for the moment ; but his confession proceeded not from sincere repentance, but from a sense of danger and desire of averting the sentence pronounced against him. For the sake of public appearance he besought Samuel not to allow their serious differences to transpire, but to join with him in a public act of worship. Under the influence of his painfully agitated feelings he designed to offer sacrifice, partly to express his gratitude for the recent victory, and partly to implore mercy and a reversal of his doom. It was, in another view, a politic scheme, that Samuel might be betrayed into a countenancing of his design in reserving the cattle for sacrificing. — *J. F. & B.*

26. **I will not return with thee.** — Samuel, seeing through him, shortly and decidedly rejects his request, and instead repeats his previous judicial sentence, because Saul's desire for forgiveness sprang not from a penitence directed to God, but from a self-loving penitence, whose aim was his own advantage ; for he did not trouble himself about his having dishonored God, but was afraid that he might lose the kingdom. — *Erdmann*. Samuel finally yielded to Saul's pleading (v. 31), but not until he had, by his stern and solemn acts and words, made on his mind deep and lasting impressions of God's anger against him. It was also one object of his turning with Saul to execute the judgment of God upon the king of the Amalekites. — *Terry*. **The Lord hath rejected thee.** — It would be wrong to consider this as the sole act of omission for which this rejection was incurred. It was but one of many acts by which he indicated an utter incapability of apprehending his true position, and in consequence manifested disposition and conduct utterly at variance with the principles of government which the welfare of the state, and, indeed, the very objects of its foundation, made it most essential to maintain. Unless the attempts at absolute independence made by Saul were checked, or visited with some signal mark of the divine displeasure, the precedents established by the first king were likely to become the rule to future sovereigns. And hence the necessity, now at the beginning, of peculiar strictness, or even of severity, for preventing the establishment of bad rules and precedents for future reigns. — *Kitto*.

ANALYSIS AND EXPOSITION.

Introduction. — In our last lesson we beheld Saul, in the flush of his first victory, confirmed as king over all Israel; in this we have the history of his rejection by the Most High. This point was not reached at once as by a sudden plunge, as a glance at the history will show. The deliverance of Israel from the Philistine yoke was one of the chief objects contemplated in the appointment of a king (9: 16). But any hopes that might have been entertained that this deliverance would be easily or speedily effected were soon shown to be fallacious. The Philistines continued to occupy strongholds in the very heart of the land, and to exercise capricious tyranny over the unresisting Israelites. When he had reigned two years Saul resolved to confront them in battle. He collected a force of three thousand men, and placed one thousand of them under the command of his son Jonathan, whose name now first appears in the history. With the other two thousand Saul took up his position in Michmash, about seven miles north of Jerusalem. Jonathan fell upon a "garrison of the Philistines that was in Geba, and routed it." This roused the indignation of Israel's enemies, and they gathered together an immense army. Saul himself retired to Gilgal, and the people, panic-stricken, hid themselves, as in the days of the Midianite spoilers, in caves and dens, and some even fled across the Jordan. The oppressions of the Philistines now became intolerable. They not only disarmed the Israelites, but removed the very smiths from among them, so that they had to go down to their enemies to get their agricultural implements sharpened. It seemed to be a crisis in the nation's fate. It actually was one in that of Saul. Samuel had promised to come to Gilgal within seven days, to offer the necessary sacrifice before going out to battle, and had plainly intimated that no decisive step was to be taken till he arrived. It was a severe trial of Saul's faith and obedience. His forces were rapidly dispersing. All seemed to depend upon his promptly striking a blow. He could control his impatience no longer, and on the seventh day he offered the sacrifices himself. He had just ended the burnt-offering when Samuel arrived. Vain were all the excuses urged by Saul to cover his disobedience. Samuel with a word reproved and convicted, sentenced and silenced him. "Thou has done foolishly" — evidencing his want of faith in the power and promise of God. He who had bidden him wait till his prophet came knew all the dangers of his position, and would have carried him safe through them, and having thus tested him and proved him worthy, would have established his dynasty over Israel for ever. This he had wantonly forfeited by his wilfulness and disobedience. The prophet uttered the first intimation thus early in Saul's reign of what he had threatened in case of disobedience, and left him (13: 1-15).

Saul and his six hundred men abode in Gilbeah. The Philis-

tines were encamped in Michmash; and, holding the king's little band in supreme contempt, they sent out divisions of their army by three different ways, to spoil and lay waste the country (13: 16-23). At this terrible juncture the Lord wrought a great deliverance for Israel by means of Jonathan in a manner which clearly showed that her defence depended not upon the skill and prowess of her king, nor on the multitude of her warriors. Jonathan, full of faith in God, without saying a word to his father, and accompanied by no one but his armor-bearer, suddenly burst upon the Philistine garri-son at Michmash, and they two slew upwards of twenty men. The Lord marvellously helped them; for there went a trembling throughout the hosts, the earth quaked, and the panic-stricken Philistines in their haste and confusion killed and trampled upon each other. The rout being discovered by Saul, he led on his force to the attack; all the people also joined in the pursuit, and Israel was saved that day with a great deliverance. The defeat and ruin of the Philistine army were complete. In the midst of this great success, Saul again displayed hastiness and lack of judgment. Carried away by the general excitement, he pronounced a curse on any man who should taste of food until the evening and the close of the battle. The evil consequences of this rash proceeding were twofold. The people, being faint with hunger and exertion, rushed hastily on the animals that were near, slew them, and sinned in eating the flesh with the blood; while Jonathan, who had not heard his father's imprecation, but had eaten a little honey, was condemned to die for this involuntary disobedience, and would certainly have been slain but for the united determination of the people, that the hero of the victory, the instrument of their deliverance, should not thus perish. Saul now assumed the offensive, and carried on successful wars against Moab, Ammon, Edom, and even the King of Zobah, a region east of Coelesyria and extending toward the Euphrates (14: 1-48).

Lesson Topics.—I. Saul's Disobedience. II. Saul's Rejection.

I. SAUL'S DISOBEDIENCE (vs. 12-15).—Samuel was commissioned a second time to test the obedience of Saul. Centuries before God had sworn that he would make perpetual war upon the fierce marauding tribe of Amalek for the hostility shown by them to Israel after the Exodus (Exod. 17: 14-16). The sentence of extermination had hitherto been only partially fulfilled, and the time had arrived when Israel, gathered as a nation under a military head, could avenge the insulted honor of him who regards all, either good or evil, that is done to his people as done to himself. Samuel was the bearer of the Divine commission to Saul. It came from one, as he reminded him (v. 1), who had anointed him king, and whose word he was bound to receive as that of the Lord himself. "Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and

suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass" (v. 3). So ran the Divine commission. The whole of the guilty nation, like Jericho of old, was placed under a ban, which included every living thing that belonged to it. All that breathed was to be put to the sword, and the spoil, instead of enriching the captors, was to be devoted to the Lord and burnt. Saul, as the anointed king of Jehovah's people, was to execute Jehovah's ban, and "utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven" (Exod. 17: 14). Such a commission would be by no means unwelcome to Saul's warlike temperament, and he at once proceeded to execute it. He mustered his forces at Telaim in southern Judah, and thence marched into the heart of the enemy's country (vs. 4, 5). Having warned the friendly Kenites (v. 6), he attacked the Amalekites and smote them through the length and breadth of their land, from Havilah in the east to Shur in the west, on the Egyptian frontier. The people, young and old, he put to the sword (vs. 6-8). But the hour of victory was the hour of Saul's moral overthrow. The same rash wilfulness which had caused his failure in his first trial, appeared again in a more marked form. He could not bend his will to simple obedience. All the *people* he utterly destroyed, but, contrary to the express command he had received, he spared the best of the spoil and Agag, the Amalekite king. With these symbols of victory Saul entered the city of Carmel, in the mountains of Judah, and, after setting up a monument of his victory, he returned to Gilgal (vs. 7-9).

"Then came the word of the Lord unto Samuel," revealing the disastrous issue of Saul's second trial, "He is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments." And it grieved Samuel. Sleep fled from the aged prophet's eyes; his affection for Saul overflowed in tears and cries of prayer all the night. Once again he proved the calming power of prayer, and in the morning he rose up to fulfil his hard commission (vs. 10-12). No interview recorded in history has a deeper moral significance. Saul's word and bearing throughout are those of a guilty man. This appears in his very salutation of the prophet. It is effusively pious, and he makes haste to declare, what had not yet been questioned, that he had "performed the commandment of the Lord." Samuel at once stripped off the mask with which he was attempting to hide his guilt even from himself: "What meaneth, then, this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and this lowing of the oxen which I hear?" The falsity of his first assertion having been thus exposed, Saul descended one more step in prevarication, and, trying to evade the responsibility of the act, replied that the people had reserved these for sacrifice, while they had destroyed the rest. His ready reply shows that he has thought over the matter, and decided upon the lie that is to cover his guilt, if the prophet should call him to account. He puts the blame upon the people, and there is a tinge of hypocrisy in the reason which he assigns for their action.

II. SAUL'S REJECTION (vs. 16-26).—Samuel cut short Saul's

excuses, and sternly silenced his cowardly transference of the blame from himself to the people. "Stay, stop your unavailing excuses"—the word is the same as that in Psa. 46: 10, "*Be still*, and know that I am God"—"and listen to the sentence with which Jehovah charged me last night" (v. 16).

The prophet then proceeded to remind Saul of his obligation to God. This rested on what the Lord had done for him, and the clear and specific command of the Most High. He pointed him to the unlooked-for elevation he had received from the Lord, when he was little in his own sight, in being "made the head over the tribes, and anointed king over Israel" (v. 17), and upbraided him with the disloyalty and ingratitude he had shown in acting in direct defiance of the Divine commands (vs. 18, 19). But Saul, not yet humbled, persisted that he *had* obeyed, repeated the same excuse, with another attempt to throw the responsibility on the people, and a word thrown in to propitiate the prophet—"to sacrifice unto Jehovah, *thy* God, in Gilgal" (vs. 20, 21). This base paltering with truth, this pretext of piety to excuse wilful disobedience, awakened the true prophetic spirit in Samuel's breast, and he proclaimed that eternal principle of moral duty in condemnation of every attempt to propitiate God, and yet to retain our sin and have our own way: "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? *Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice*, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king." The truth here embodied lies at the foundation of all religious service—the inferior worth of ceremonial to moral obedience. The supremely important thing is simple obedience to God. No ceremonial observances whatever can supersede the necessity of that. No atonement can avail with God for us that does not secure our obedience to God's law. The Most High will not be propitiated on any other conditions. The design of Christ's work is not to relieve us from the necessity of obedience, but to bring us power to obey. Disobedience is rebellion against God, and this is among the very worst of all sins—is the essence of all sin.

Overwhelmed with remorse, Saul twice confessed his guilt, though, still unable to bring himself to unconditional confession, he continued to attribute his offence to the wishes of the people, whom he was afraid to irritate by insisting on the destruction of the spoil. He prayed Samuel to pardon his sin, and turn back and join him in the worship of Jehovah. Saul does not appear to advantage in all this. His admission of his sin and plea that he feared the people is a confession of cowardice. He prays simply to be restored to his former standing. His prayer is utterly selfish and his regret only respects the *consequences* of his sin. He is therefore denied. Saul had ceased to be royal; he had become ignoble. He had rejected the kingly before God had rejected him as king. It is impossible to read the history

of Saul without many painful and commiserating thoughts. A man who, had he been true to God, would have been strong enough for his high place and work as the first king of Israel, and might have done great things for his people. Not understanding that in God was his strength and sufficiency, his whole life proved to be a conspicuous and disastrous failure. There was a fatal weakness of soul and character about him which showed itself at every great crisis, and at length brought his days to an end in calamity, disgrace, and despair.

Nov. 18, 1883.]

LESSON VII.

[1 SAM. 16:1-13.

DAVID ANOINTED.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"I have found David my servant; with my holy oil have I anointed him."—Psa. 89:20.

TIME.—B.C. 1063. **PLACE.**—Bethlehem.

LESSON-TEXT AND NOTES.

1. And the Lord said unto Sam'u-el,¹ How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing² I have rejected him from reigning over Is'ra-el? fill thine horn with oil³ and go, I will send thee to Jes'se the Beth'le-hem-ite: for⁴ I have provided me a king among his sons.

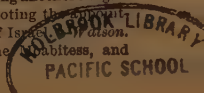
¹ Chap. 15:35; Jer. 7:16; 11:14; 14:11.

² 2 Kings 9:1.

³ Chap. 15:23.

⁴ Ps. 78:70; 89:19, 20; Isa. 55:4.

1. **How long wilt thou mourn for Saul?**—Samuel's affectionate nature passed through a bitter struggle before he could become reconciled to the will of Jehovah. He had loved Saul, and done his utmost to preserve him. All night he had cried unto the Lord for him (chap. 15:11), and when he thought of his sad fall, and the wrath of God against him, he trembled for the safety of the kingdom.—*Terry*. The question: *How long?* contains a divine reproof, indicating (so the words: "seeing I have rejected him from being king over Israel") that Samuel, by his deep, long-continued grief over Saul's condition (a lamentable one under all circumstances and evermore) was out of sympathy with God and God's decrees and ways, which are clearly announced in these words and in 15:35.—*Erdmann*. The excellent prophet here displays something of human weakness. Samuel here looked on a vessel made by the invisible hand of God himself utterly broken and minished, and his emotion thereat shows his pious and holy affection,—yet he is not without sin; not at all that the feeling is evil, but because it is excessive.—*Calvin*. **Fill thine horn with oil.**—For the purpose of anointing another king.—*Terry*. Anointing with oil was a symbolical act, denoting the appointment to high office in the ancient Church or kingdom of Israel.—*Watson*. **Jesse the Beth-lehemite.**—Grandson of Ruth the Moabitess, and



2. And Sam'u-el said, How can I go? If Saul hear it he will kill me. And the Lord said, Take an heifer with thee, and say, I am come to sacrifice⁵ to the Lord.

3. And call Jes'se to the sacrifice, and I will show thee what thou shalt do: and thou

shalt anoint unto me him⁶ whom I name unto thee.

4. And Sam'u-el did that which the Lord spake, and came to Beth'le-hem. And the elders of the town trembled at his coming, and said, Comest thou peaceably?⁷

5. And he said, Peaceably:

⁵ Chap. 9 : 12 ; 20 : 29.

⁶ Deut. 17 : 15.

⁷ 1 Kings 2 : 13.

belonging to the tribe of Judah through the line of his male ancestors (Ruth 4: 18-22).—*Kirkpatrick*.

2. **How can I go? If Saul hear it he will kill me.**—This protest against the plain direction of the voice of God rests naturally on the fact that Saul was still, notwithstanding the divine sentence of rejection, the rightful king of Israel, and would regard the designation of another to the office (if it could not be kept concealed from him) as an act of treachery and revolt, even though Samuel should plead the divine command in his justification.—*Erdmann*. **And the Lord said.**—There is here an appearance of duplicity sanctioned by divine authority which it is important to examine. It was the purpose of God that David should be anointed at this time as Saul's successor, and as the ancestor and the type of his Christ. It was not the purpose of God that Samuel should stir up a civil war by setting up David as Saul's rival. *Secrecy*, therefore, was a necessary part of the transaction. But *secrecy* and *concealment* are not the same as *duplicity* and *falsehood*. Concealment of a good purpose, for a good purpose, is clearly justifiable, *e. g.* in war, in medical treatment, in state policy, and in the ordinary affairs of life. In the providential government of the world, and in God's dealings with individuals, concealment of His purpose, till the proper time for its development, is the rule rather than the exception, and must be so. There is, therefore, nothing in the least inconsistent with *Truth* in the occurrence here related. Comp. Ex. 7 : 16 ; 8 : 1, 26, 27 ; 9 : 13, etc.—*Cook*. It may be inferred from the command that Samuel was in the habit of holding religious gatherings in different provincial towns from time to time.—*Kirkpatrick*.

3. **And call, etc.**—Three directions are to be distinguished: (1) Samuel is to invite Jesse to the sacrificial meal; (2) he is to await *direction from above*; (3) he is to anoint as king him whom God shall name.—*Erdmann*.

4. **And Samuel did, etc.**—The troubled condition of soul, which could not accept God's thoughts and ways, disappeared before the strict obedience of the will, which bowed before the Lord's will.—*Erdmann*. **Bethlehem.**—See *Third Quarter*, Lesson XI, v. 19, note. **The elders of the town, etc.**—*The elders of the city came to meet him trembling*. Perhaps Samuel's visits were often made with the view of rebuking sin and correcting abuses, and hence their alarm; or the breach between him and Saul may have made the elders afraid of incurring the royal displeasure by welcoming him.—*Kirkpatrick*.

5. **Sanctify yourselves.**—According to the directions of the law, by

I am come to sacrifice unto the Lord: sanctify⁸ yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice. And he sanctified Jes'se and his sons, and called them to the sacrifice.

6. And it came to pass, when they were come, that he looked on Eli'ab,⁹ and said, Surely the Lord's anointed is before him.

7. But the Lord said unto Sam'u-el, Look not¹⁰ on his countenance, or on the height of his stature, because I have refused him; for¹¹ the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward

appearance,¹² but the Lord looketh on the heart.¹³

8. Then Jes'se called Abin'-a-dab, and made him pass before Sam'u-el. And he said, Neither hath the Lord chosen this.

9. Then Jes'se made Sham'-mah to pass by. And he said, Neither hath the Lord chosen this.

10. Again, Jes'se made seven of his sons to pass before Sam'u-el. And Sam'u-el said unto Jes'se, The Lord hath not chosen these.

11. And Sam'u-el said unto Jes'se, Are here all thy chil-

⁸ Ex. 19:10; Num. 11:18; Josh. 3:5; Job 1:5; 1 Cor. 11:28.

⁹ Chap. 17:13; 1 Chron. 28:18.

¹¹ Isa. 55:8, 9.

¹⁰ Ps. 147:10.

¹² 2 Cor. 10:7.

¹³ 1 Kings 8:39; 1 Chron. 28:9; Ps. 7:9; Jer. 17:10; Rev. 2:23.

change of clothes, washings, and abstinence. See Ex. 19:10-15. — *Terry*. Probably the sacrifice was not till the next day. And he sanctified Jesse and his sons. — *i. e.* took care that they should be sanctified. — *Cook*.

6. And said. — Said to himself: thought. Eliab by his height and his countenance seemed the natural counterpart of Saul, whose successor the prophet came to select. But the day was gone when kings were chosen because they were head and shoulders taller than the rest. — *Stanley*. Eliab is probably the same as "Elihu, one of the brethren of David," whom David appointed "ruler of the tribe of Judah" (1 Chron. 27:18). — *Kirkpatrick*.

7. But the Lord said, etc. — In like manner, the Lord in the days of His flesh read and answered men's thoughts. Comp. Matt. 12:25; Luke 5:22; 7:39, 40, etc. — *Cook*. Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature. — This seems to be a plain allusion to the external appearance of Saul (chap. 9:2). That which chiefly recommended him to the favor of Israel was his size and beauty; but now, in selecting a man after his own heart, Jehovah shows that his divine judgment is based not on external form or comeliness, but on the inner life. David also, however, was of a goodly appearance (v. 12). — *Terry*.

8, 9, 10. The same decision is announced with reference to the second son, Abinadab. And so as to the third, Shammah. Thus Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel. But Samuel's decision, according to the voice of God within him, is always negative: Neither hath the Lord chosen this! — *Erdmann*.

11. The youngest . . . he keepeth the sheep. — Jesse, having evidently no idea of David's wisdom and bravery, spoke of him as the most unfit; as one not to be taken into account in the conduct of any

dren? And he said, there remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he¹⁴ keepeth the sheep. And Sam'u-el said unto Jes'se, Send and fetch him: for we will not sit down till he come hither.

12. And he sent, and brought him in. Now he *was* ruddy,¹⁵ and withal of a beautiful coun-

tenance, and goodly to look to. And the Lord said, Arise, anoint him: for this *is* he.

13. Then Sam'u-el took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren; and the Spirit¹⁶ of the Lord came upon Da'vid from that day forward. So Sam'u-el rose up and went to Ra'mah.

¹⁴ 2 Sam. 7 : 8 ; Ps. 78 : 70-72.

¹⁵ Chap. 17 : 42.

¹⁶ Chap. 10 : 6, 9, 10 ; Judg. 11 : 29 ; 14 : 6.

public affairs. God, in his providence, so ordered it that the appointment of David might the more clearly appear to be a Divine purpose, and not the design either of Samuel or Jesse. — **Samuel said . . . we will not sit down till he come hither** — we will not come around, we will not surround — *i. e.* by sitting at table (cf. Ps. 128 : 3). — *J. F. & B.*

12. **Ruddy.** — The word denotes the red hair and fair skin which are regarded as a mark of beauty in southern countries, where the hair and complexion are generally dark. **Of a beautiful countenance, etc.** — Lit. "beautiful-eyed and goodly in appearance." Compare the description of Joseph (Gen. 39 : 6) and Moses (Ex. 2 : 2 ; Acts 7 : 20). — *Kirkpatrick*. In this youngest son were united the beauty of the oldest, and that which is well-pleasing to the Lord, what "the Lord looks on," a heart and mind after the will and good pleasures of the Lord (v. 7). And so the divine decision is announced to Samuel. — *Erdmann*.

13. **Anointed him in the midst of his brethren.** — But though these sons of Jesse saw this honor conferred on their youngest brother, they seem not to have understood its meaning. They may have thought that he was anointed because of some desire or intention of the prophet to make him a pupil of one of the prophetic schools. — *Terry*. **The spirit of the Lord came upon David.** — The anointing is placed in casual connection with the communication of the Spirit, the former typifying what the latter secured (cf. Mark 6 : 13 ; James 5 : 14) ; it was a seal and pledge of the blessings which the Lord bestowed upon the rulers of the nation for the people's good. — *Hengstenberg*. A spirit of prudence to behave himself wisely upon all occasions ; with a spirit of courage, so that he durst grapple with a lion and a bear ; and the spirit of prophecy, in which he was afterwards very eminent. In short, a spirit fit for a prince. — *Patrick*. The word **from that day forward** denotes the continuity of the impartation of the Spirit to David's inner life, and indicates its unbroken development under the guidance of the divine Spirit to full fitness and capacity for the royal calling. — *Erdmann*. It does not appear that Samuel informed David of his destiny, as he did Saul ; but the special movings of the Spirit on his heart, and the successive developments of Providence in his favor, must have gradually convinced him that he was, sooner or later, to be recognized as the Lord's anointed. At a later time this seems to have been openly revealed (2 Sam. 3 : 18). — *Terry*.

ANALYSIS AND EXPOSITION.

Introduction.—When Saul and Samuel parted at Gilgal they parted never to meet again. Each repaired to his own house—the king to Gibeah, the prophet to Ramah, where he mourned for Saul. It is probable that the rejection of the king was not generally known among the people, except so far as it gradually filtrated down to them through the limited circle which at first learned the important secret. The rejection was not followed by any actual deposition from the throne. But Saul's mind was haunted by the words of Samuel, "The Lord hath rejected thee; hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day; hath given it to a neighbor of thine, that is better than thou." He must have brooded gloomily on these statements at times. He became stubborn and malignant. We know what his resolution was afterwards. He determined to maintain himself in the kingdom; to be ready for this new king—this "neighbor" better than he, and to make way with him as soon as possible. Thus a dozen or more dark and troubled years passed over the rejected ruler's head, and still there was no indication as to who his successor was to be.

In the meantime Samuel continued to mourn over Saul. Outwardly so stern towards the offending monarch, his heart was full of tenderness towards him. He was still engaged, at least measurably, in the exercise of his judicial functions, for "he judged Israel all the days of his life" (7: 15). He had some care of the company of youthful prophets who were being trained in the school probably founded by him at, or just outside, his city of Ramah (19: 20-24). Still, busied as he was with these duties, his craving for the human affection he had lost, his sadness over the failure of his once bright hopes, and, perhaps, a dream that the Divine sentence against the king might be reversed, kept him restless and unsatisfied.

Lesson Topics.—I. The Prophet's Commission. II. The Lord's Choice.

I. THE PROPHET'S COMMISSION (vs. 1-5).—The prolonged bitterness of Samuel's sorrow at last incurred the reproof of God, and called out an emphatic repetition of the sentence of rejection against Saul. "How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel?" The prophet is recalled from the indulgence of his grief by a call to new work in the designation of Saul's successor. This commission could hardly have been a very welcome one to Samuel. His disinclination to the errand was not obscurely made known. This successor whom he was to anoint was to be found in Bethlehem, among the sons of Jesse. His personal safety, nay, his life, would be compromised by an act which, in the eyes of a monarch jealous for the stability of his forfeited throne, would be regarded as little less than one of high treason. "How can I go," said the reluctant prophet, "If Saul hear it, he will kill

me." The Divine voice indicated a way in which Samuel might execute his commission without arousing the suspicions of Saul. He is commanded to take a heifer with him and summon the inhabitants of Bethlehem to a sacrifice. Here was no breach of the law of truth. All that Samuel professed to do he did; though for prudential reasons he made no public allusion to the other and the principal reason for his visit. Samuel was further directed to "call Jesse to the sacrifice," and the Lord promised to guide him to what he should do. "And Samuel did that which the Lord spake, and came to Bethlehem."

The story of Bethlehem, "the house of bread," the birth-place of David, and of David's Son and Lord, is of intense interest; and many are the beautiful lessons it suggests. The little city—little even "among the thousands of Judah"—is six Roman miles south of Jerusalem; and, occupying an elevated position, shows itself to great advantage, from whatever point it is approached. The sides of the hill below the city are laid out in well-kept terraces, covered with vine, olive, and fig-tree. In the valleys beneath and the plain to the eastward there are grain-fields, and on the surrounding hills pasture lands. "I saw many flocks of sheep and goats on these hills," says Dr. Thomson, "and was vividly reminded of those passages in Bible history in which the flocks and the shepherds of Bethlehem figure with so much interest, as in David's youth, and at the birth of Jesus. I was equally delighted with another sight on the plains of Bethlehem. The reapers were in the fields cutting barley, and after every company were women and children gleaning, just as Ruth did when Boaz came to look at his laborers." This little town, of slight importance in all other respects, is unsurpassed in the wealth and beauty of its associations. It is impossible to identify any particular spot, but the traveller cannot help feeling as he views it and its surroundings that he has beneath his eyes the birthplace of Israel's greatest king and the world's Divine Redeemer, the grain-fields of Boaz in which Ruth gleaned, and the hills on which the messenger found the young shepherd on the day of his anointing, and on which those other shepherds were "keeping watch over their flock by night," when the angel of the Lord appeared to them and proclaimed the "good tidings of great joy;" while away in the distance rise in endless succession the barren hills of the wilderness in which David took refuge when hard pressed by Saul; and close at hand is the well "by the gate," for whose water David longed when in the cave of Adullam.

Samuel came to Bethlehem. He was probably in the habit of visiting towns, when occasion required, to denounce and punish wrong-doing, as well as to benefit them with his priestly ministrations. As the elders of the town saw the aged prophet ascending the long hill leading up to the gate of their city they were much alarmed. The cause of this if not explained; probably they supposed he was come to rebuke and punish them for some sin of which they were conscious. "Thus conscience does

make cowards of us all." They anxiously inquired if he came with peaceful intent. He assured them that he came in peace, and bade them and the house of Jesse to sanctify themselves for the sacrifice. There Jesse and his family made a goodly show. Jesse was the ninth, in direct descent, from Judah, the son of Jacob. He was the grandson of Boaz, who was a wealthy and prominent man in Bethlehem. Jesse was probably the chief man of the place at this time. He had a family of eight sons and three daughters, of whom David was the youngest. On the occasion of Samuel's visit the venerable father is surrounded by all his sons except the youngest, who seems to have been of small consideration in the family, and, accordingly, was sent abroad to watch the flocks.

II. THE LORD'S CHOICE (vs. 6-13).—The sacrifice having been offered, the prophet invited Jesse and his sons to take their places at the feast with which the observances concluded. As they entered the young men passed before Samuel, making their obeisance to the venerated priest and judge. He evidently had an eye for manly beauty, and the tall and handsome Eliab, Jesse's first-born, seemed to him a fit successor to the rejected king. "Surely," he said to himself, "the Lord's anointed is before him." But an inward voice warned him of his mistake in estimating men by their outward qualifications instead of by their spiritual gifts. The prophet of the Lord must judge with the Lord's judgment: "But the Lord said unto Samuel, look not on his countenance or on the height of his stature, because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." With the Most High the heart is the man. Not physical strength, not intellectual greatness, not material possessions, not externalisms of any kind, but the *character* is the great thing in his sight. The Bible is decisive in the assertion of this principle. On every page this inscription is indelibly written: "The Lord looketh on the heart." Man may pride himself on his physical strength and beauty, his intellectual acumen and culture, his social position and material wealth; he may be exceedingly punctilious about creeds and forms of religion, and, Jehu-like, cry, "Come with me and see my zeal for the Lord," and yet find his condemnation written in God's Word, because, with all his pretentious externalism, his heart is not right with God. "As a man thinketh in his heart so is he," is the emphatic voice of Revelation. And the common conscience of humanity is in harmony with it. However prone men are to judge by outward appearances, false as are the principles on which they often choose to act, there is in them a profound recognition of this truth. They instinctively do homage to truth and sincerity, and as instinctively loathe the hypocrite. The individual consciousness attests the principle thus declared and recognized. The wrong-hearted, however successfully they may deceive those who judge by the outward appearance and win their approbation, are always self-condemned; while those whose hearts are right with God enjoy a cheering consciousness

of inward peace, however the world may misunderstand and frown upon them. "Keep thy heart with all diligence." "The Lord looketh on the heart." According to this principle of judgment Eliab was passed by, and according to the same principle, Abinadab and Shammah, and after them four other sons of Jesse, were refused.

"And Samuel said unto Jesse: Are here all thy children?" Jesse replied, "There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he keepeth the sheep." But without this despised one the feast could not begin. "Send and fetch him," was Samuel's reply, "for we will not sit down till he come hither." To the amazement of Jesse, and perhaps the ill-concealed annoyance of the elder brothers, the commencement of the feast was deferred till the young shepherd had been summoned and brought home. As soon as the comely lad entered the long-delayed intimation was received: "Arise, anoint him, for this is he." "Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brethren."

David was now about fifteen years of age. We have a description of him as he appeared before the prophet. "He was ruddy" — that is, with red, or auburn hair — "and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to." The mountain air imparted bloom to his cheeks, vigor to his frame, and firmness to his limbs. David was a true child of nature. She had taught him much of the glories of the Hebrews' God. His personal appearance was but the reflex of his inward beauty. Otherwise he would not have been chosen. We have already learned that "*man* looketh on the outward appearance, but *the Lord* looketh on the heart." The ruddy boy, in his shepherd's coat, tending the sheep of his father on the hillsides in the wilderness of Judah, was already, if not a king, endowed with kingly gifts, and with those gifts more than kingly, which gave to his royal state in after years its truest splendor and glory. It might, perhaps, at first sight appear that the circumstances of David's youth were very unfavorable to the development of such qualities as would fit him for the position to which he was now anointed. But a closer view teaches us that this was not so. Dr. W. M. Taylor well and beautifully says: "It (Bethlehem) was an appropriate training-place for the future king and bard of Israel, and no occupation could have been more conducive to the development in him of those qualities of prudence, promptitude, and prowess which his after-life required than that of a shepherd. Its solitude would cast him upon the companionship of God; and when the night unveiled the glory of the stars he would become familiar with the grandeur of the heavens, thus storing his mind with lofty thoughts and holy musings, which, either then or at a later day, came forth glorified and made immortal by the music of his verse. Nor was this all; his unceasing labors and occasional conflicts with wild animals from the neighboring wilderness would give him physical strength; while, again, his proximity to the tribe of Benjamin would call forth in him a desire to outrival, in their friendly matches, the

skill of those eminent marksmen, who could sling at a hair-breadth and not miss, and so, all unconsciously to himself, prepare him for the work which lay before him."

It is difficult to determine how far Jesse and his sons understood the meaning of this anointing. No words of Samuel's are recorded as having accompanied the act, so that even the subject of it may have been left for a time in ignorance of its purport. Probably the precise meaning of what had just been done was left in obscurity at the moment, to be more fully explained by Samuel hereafter, as the lad's mind opened under the teaching of the Holy Spirit to a comprehension of the solemn responsibility which he would be called to meet. "The Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward." The holy influence, of which the anointing oil was the symbol, descended into his heart and worked within as a refining, elevating, and strengthening power, fitting him, step by step, for the new tasks which lay before him in the dim future. To whatever work God calls us he will open our way, and for it he will qualify us.

Nov. 25, 1883.]

LESSON VIII.

[1 SAM. 17:38-51.

DAVID AND GOLIATH.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"The battle is the Lord's."—Verse 47.

TIME.—B.C. 1063. **PLACE.**—The valley of Elah, between Jerusalem and Gaza.

LESSON-TEXT AND NOTES.

38. And Saul armed David with his armor, and he put an helmet of brass upon his head; also he armed him with a coat of mail.

39. And David girded his sword upon his armor, and he assayed to go; for he had not proved it. And David said unto Saul, I cannot go with

38. **Saul armed David with his armor.**—*Clothed David with his dress*; probably a special military dress adapted to be worn with armor. The sword was fastened to it (v. 39). Cp. 18:4 (E. V. *garments*).—*Kirkpatrick*. **A helmet of brass.**—A defensive armor for the head. **A coat of mail.**—Literally, *a coat of scales*. A defensive armor for the body, consisting of plates of brass overlapping each other like the scales on a fish, or shingles on a roof. The Hebrew word is rendered *habergeon* in 2 Chron. 26:14, and Neh. 4:16.—*Terry*.

39. **Assayed to go**, attempted, started to go.—*Gray*. **He had not proved it.**—It should be "them," viz., the clothes and arms above mentioned. David had never tried such before and felt them an incumbrance.—*Cook*. David cannot go, he says, in these garments, because he is not accustomed to them. He sees that they would only hinder him in

these; for I have not proved *them*. And Da'vid put them off him.

40. And he took his staff in his hand, and chose him five smooth stones out of the brook,

and put them in a shepherd's bag which he had, even in a scrip; and his sling *was* in his hand: and he drew near to the Phi-lis'tine.

the fight, and he **put them off him**.—*Erdmann*. He desired to go forth to the battle in the lightest possible armor: strong in the Lord, not in himself; armed not with steel, but with faith.—*Augustine*. God would show, as in the case of Gideon (Jud. 7: 2), that the victory was his alone.—*Kirkpatrick*.

40. **Staff**.—Here, perhaps, a shepherd's staff, as Zech. 11: 7, 10, 14; but as probably the common *walking-stick*, Gen. 32: 10; Num. 27, etc. It is also used for any *stick* or *rod* (Gen. 30: 37; Jer. 1: 11, etc.).—*Cook*. **Smooth stones**.—Such as would pass most easily and rapidly through the air.—*Terry*. **Out of the brook**.—The stream which ran through the valley which separated the Philistines from the Israelites (v. 3) and which was very likely dry at this time.—*Cook*. **In a scrip**.—The scrip was a bag of leather thrown over the shoulder, and used by shepherds and travellers to carry provisions. It is still used by Eastern shepherds, and is made of the skin of a kid, stripped off whole and tanned. This is the only passage in the Old Testament where it is mentioned; but reference is made to it in several places in the New Testament. Matt. 10: 10; Mark 6: 8; Luke 9: 3; 10: 4; 22: 35, 36.—*Freeman*. **Sling**.—The sling of the ancient Egyptians, which probably was of the same sort as that of David, was a thong of leather or string plaited, broad at the middle, and having a loop at one end, by which it was fixed upon and firmly held by the hand; the other extremity terminated in a lash, which escaped from the fingers when the stone was thrown.—*Kitto*. The sling has been in all ages the favorite weapon of the shepherds of Syria. The Benjamites were especially expert in their use of it; even the left-handed "could sling stones at a hair breadth and not miss" (Judg. 20: 16).—*Cambridge Bible*. It has been commonly supposed that, in laying aside Saul's armor, and preferring his own sling, David was giving up every advantage, and that the chances of his success were materially lessened by the fact that he was thus, comparatively speaking, defenceless. But that is a mistake. The genius of David was made manifest in the choice of his weapons, and so soon as he had determined to use the sling the issue was not doubtful. The giant was open to attack only on the forehead; but then he was cased in such heavy armor that he could not move with swiftness, and so he could prove a formidable foe only when he was fighting at close quarters. David, on the other hand, was free, and could run with swiftness and agility. While using the sling he could begin the attack from a distance, and out of the range of his adversary's weapons. So far, therefore, as weapons were concerned, the advantage was clearly on David's side, provided only he could preserve his precision of aim and steadiness of hand. He was like one armed with a rifle, while his enemy had only a spear and a sword; and if only he could take sure aim, the result was absolutely certain.—*W. M. Taylor*. **He drew near to the Philis-**

41. And the Phi-lis'tine came on and drew near unto Da'vid; and the man that bare the shield *went* before him.

42. And when the Phi-lis'tine looked about, and saw Da'vid, he¹ disdained him, for he was *but* a youth and ruddy,²

¹ Ps. 123 : 4 ; 1 Cor. 1 : 27-29.

² 2 Sam. 3 : 8 ; 2 Kings 8 : 13.

and of a fair countenance.

43. And the Phi-lis'tine said unto Da'vid, *Am I a dog,*³ that thou comest to me with staves ? And the Phi-lis'tine cursed Da'vid by his gods.

44. And the Phi-lis'tine said⁴ to Da'vid, Come to me, and

³ Chap. 16 : 12.

⁴ 1 Kings 20 : 10, 11.

tine. — Goliath, a famous giant of Gath, who, "morning and evening for forty days," defied the armies of Israel. He was possibly descended from the old Rephaim, of whom a scattered remnant took refuge with the Philistines after their dispersion by the Ammonites (Deut. 2 : 20, 21 ; 2 Sam. 21 : 22). His height was "six cubits and a span," which, taking the cubit at twenty-one inches, would make him ten and one-half feet high. But the LXX. and Josephus read "*four* cubits and a span." Even on this computation Goliath would be, as Josephus calls him, a truly enormous man. — *Wm. Smith.*

41. **The man that bare the shield went before him.** — In the Assyrian sculptures there are representations of warriors fighting in this manner, with men before them holding the large shields, with the bottom resting on the ground, thus forming movable breastworks. The great shields of the Philistines seem to have been of circular shape. — *Freeman.*

42. **He disdained him.** — He held him in contempt ; he saw that he was young ; and, from his *ruddy complexion*, supposed him to be *effeminate*. — *Clarke.* He "*despises him*," seeing in him not a warrior, but a pretty youth. This account tallies exactly with 16 : 12. — *Erdmann.*

43. **Am I a dog ?** — A common proverb. The Oriental dog is a foul, cowardly, skulking animal ; the lowest thing to be compared to. — *Hanna.* **With staves**, or with "*sticks*." The plural is used in contemptuous exaggeration of the armor of David, which appeared so thoroughly unfit for the occasion. — *Keil.* It is very likely that Goliath did not perceive the *sting*, which David might have kept coiled up within his hand. **Cursed David by his gods.** — Prayed his gods to curse him. This long parley between David and Goliath is quite in the style of those times. — *Clarke.*

44. **The Philistine said . . .** 45. **Said David to the Philistine.** — When two champions met they generally made each of them a speech, and sometimes recited some verses, filled with allusions and epithets of the most opprobrious kind, and hurled contempt and defiance at one another (as in *Homer's* "*Iliad*," i. 4 ; also xxiii., 21). This kind of abusive dialogue is common among the Arab combatants still. David's speech, however, presents a striking contrast to the usual strain of these invectives. It was full of pious trust : and to God he ascribed all the glory of the triumph he anticipated. — *J. F. & B.* **Thou comest to me with the sword . . . I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, etc.** — What Goliath expected from his *arms*, David expected from the

I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air and to the beasts of the field.

45. Then said Da'vid to the Phi-lis'tine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but⁵ I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Is'ra-el, whom thou hast defied.⁶

46. This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine⁷ head from thee; and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Phi-lis'tines this day unto the fowls⁸ of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may

know⁹ that there is a God in Is'ra-el.

47. And all this assembly shall¹⁰ know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear: for¹¹ the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you into our hands.

48. And it came to pass, when the Phi-lis'tine arose, and came and drew nigh to meet Da'vid, that Da'vid hasted, and ran toward the army to meet the Phi-lis'tine.

49. And Da'vid put his hand in his bag, and took thence a stone, and slang it, and smote the Phi-lis'tine in his forehead, that the stone sunk into

⁵ 2 Sam. 22 : 33, 35 ; Ps. 124 : 8 ; 125 : 1 ; 2 Cor. 3 : 5 ; Heb. 11 : 33.

⁶ Ver. 10.

⁷ Ver. 51.

⁸ Deut. 28 : 26 ; Matt. 24 : 28.

⁹ Josh. 4 : 24 ; 1 Kings 8 : 43 ; 18 : 36 ; 2 Kings 19 : 19 ; Ps. 46 : 10 ; Isa. 52 : 10.

¹⁰ Ps. 44 : 6, 7 ; Hosea 1 : 7 ; Zech. 4 : 6.

¹¹ 2 Chron. 20 : 15.

ineffable name. — *Clarke*. Whom thou hast defied, by defying the armies of Israel.

46. **This day will the Lord deliver, etc.** — This was no mere boast of David's, like Goliath's words in verse 44, but a prophetic utterance under the influence of "the Spirit of the Lord" (16 : 13). For the truth here taught, compare ch. 2 : 1-10. **That all the earth may know, etc.** Compare 1 Kings 18 : 36 — *Cook*. The sense is : The other nations will learn that God does not suffer Himself to be mocked in his people, but as their covenant-God helpfully and mightily espouses their cause. — *Erdmann*.

47. **The Lord saveth not with sword and spear.** — A lesson which is needed at all times, when men are tempted to fall down and worship brute force. It is a leading thought in Hannah's song (2 : 1-10) ; cp. also 14 : 6 ; Ps. 44 : 6, 7 ; Hos. 1 : 7 ; Zech. 4 : 6 ; 1 Cor. 1 : 27, 28. — *Kirkpatrick*. Observe the consistent teaching of such passages as Exod. 14 : 13-18 ; Judg. 7 : 2, 4, 7 ; 1 Sam. 14 : 6 ; Ps. 44 : 6, etc., and their practical use to the Church as lessons of trust in God and distrust of ourselves. — *Cook*.

48. **The Philistine arose.** — This was an end of the parley. The Philistine came forward to meet David : and David, on his part, ran forward to meet the Philistine. — *Clarke*.

49. **Put his hand in the bag, as he ran.** — Took thence a stone and slang it ; practice had made him very dexterous, and God guided the stone. — *Gray*. **In his forehead.** — The narrative does not explain how his forehead came to be exposed ; whether his helmet was off at the time, or whether the stone pierced the helmet, or whether it went in at

his forehead; and he fell¹² upon his face to the earth.

50. So Da'vid prevailed over the Phi-lis-tine with a sling¹³ and with a stone, and smote the Phi-lis'tine, and slew him; but *there was no sword in the hand of Da'vid.*

51. Therefore David ran,

¹² 1 Kings 22: 34.

¹⁴ Chap. 21: 9; 2 Sam. 23: 21; Ps. 7: 15, 16.

¹⁶ Heb. 11: 34.

¹³ Judg. 3: 31; 15: 15.

¹⁵ Ver. 46.

and stood upon the Phi-lis-tine, and took his sword,¹⁴ and drew it out of the sheath thereof, and slew him, and cut off¹⁵ his head therewith. And when the Phi-lis'tines saw their champion was dead, they fled.¹⁶

some point which the helmet did not cover. Either of these ways is conceivable. — *Cook.*

50. **No sword in the hand of David.** — The added statement, "but there was no sword in the hand of David," is at the same time the reason for the following statement, namely, the slaying of the giant with his own sword, with which David cut off his head. — *Erdmann.*

51. **Slew him,** completed his work ere the giant could recover from his blow. — *Gray.* **Cut off his head.** — As David had predicted, v. 46, when as yet he had no sword in his possession. — *Cook.* Not as an evidence of the giant's death, for his slaughter had been effected in presence of the whole army, but as a trophy to be borne to Saul. — *J. F. & B.* **When the Philistines saw their champion was dead they fled.** — They were panic-struck; and not being willing to fulfil the condition which was stipulated by Goliath, they precipitately left the field. The Israelites took a proper advantage of these circumstances, and totally routed their enemies. — *Clarke.*

ANALYSIS AND EXPOSITION.

Introduction. — Samuel's visit to Bethlehem caused no outward change in David's daily life. He returned to his former duties, and by his faithful care of his father's flocks trained his soul for the high work for which the Lord had marked him out — to "feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance." Meanwhile the Spirit of the Lord, which came upon David more and more, departed from Saul, and an evil spirit troubled him, so that he became moody, and liable to sudden fits of frenzy. To soothe his malady his servants advised that a skilful player on the harp should be sought, and that he should try the charms of music, always powerful against melancholy, and believed in the East to possess a magical influence over wild and venomous beasts as well as savage men. Saul consented, and the name of David was mentioned as a cunning minstrel and of tried valor. Thereupon the king sent for him, and thus David was introduced for the first time to the court of Saul, whose troubled spirit owned the sweet influence of the future Psalmist of Israel; he loved David, and made him not only his minstrel but his armor-bearer. When

the paroxysms of the royal malady were abated, David returned to Bethlehem (16: 14-23).

An invasion of the Philistines, which seems to have taken place when he was about twenty years of age, at length gave David an opportunity of manifesting to the nation how great a man had been growing up in comparative obscurity in their midst, and was the occasion of raising him, in a single day, from his humble duties at the sheepfolds, if not to the throne, to a position which was hardly second to that of the king who still reigned over Israel. These inveterate and powerful enemies of Israel, probably encouraged by the growing weakness of Saul's government, had on this occasion penetrated as far south as to the Mountain Ephes-dammim, near Shochoh, in western Judah, and had there entrenched themselves. Saul, who seems at once to have raised an army to oppose the invaders, took up his position in the valley of Elah, a narrow ravine alone separating the two hosts. It was this ravine which became the scene of the combat between David and Goliath (vs. 1-3).

Lesson Topics.—I. The Philistines' Champion. II. Israel's Champion. III. The Combat.

I. THE PHILISTINES' CHAMPION. — With the Philistian hosts was a giant of Gath named Goliath, probably a descendant of the Anakim. His height is here stated to be "six cubits and a span," or about nine feet nine inches, taking the cubit at eighteen inches; by the Septuagint and Josephus it is stated to be four cubits and a span, or six feet nine inches. Keil says: "His height was six cubits and a span, *i. e.* according to a calculation made by Thenius, about nine feet two inches Parisian measure—a great height, no doubt, though not altogether unparalleled, and hardly greater than that of the great-uncle of Iren, who came to Berlin in the year 1857." His strength seems to have been proportioned to his stature. None but a Hercules could have borne his armor. "He was armed with a coat of mail; and the weight of the coat was five thousand shekels of brass," or about one hundred and fifty-six pounds, taking the shekel at half an ounce avoirdupois, besides other defensive armor so ponderous, complete, and strong that it might be expected to shield him perfectly from the missiles of ancient warfare. His offensive weapons would seem sufficient to annihilate any ordinary antagonist. The staff of his spear was like a weaver's beam, and his spear's head weighed six hundred shekels of iron," or nearly nineteen pounds avoirdupois, "and one bearing a shield went before him" (vs. 4-7). Such was the champion of the Philistines. They felt perfectly safe in committing their nation's destiny to his single arm as against any warrior whom the Israelites might bring out against him. Every morning he came forth out of the camp of the Philistines and stalked down into the valley to offer single combat. With a voice answering to his stature, he demanded of "the servants of Saul" to find a warrior to meet him, a free-born Philistine, and proposed that the nation whose champion

was defeated should serve the other (vs. 8-10). His words of defiance, coupled with his immense size and manifest power, appalled the men of Israel. Even the tall and majestic Saul declined the challenge, and, like his people, was "dismayed and greatly afraid" (v. 11). The repetition of this challenge for forty days had not abated their fears, nor did they seem to approach any nearer to a final issue on the basis of it.

II. ISRAEL'S CHAMPION. — While things lay in this posture in the camps of the hostile armies, David, in his shepherd's coat, and with his shepherd's wallet and sling, and also with the simple faith in God and in God's cause, which he had in like manner brought with him from the sheepfolds, appeared on the scene. The camp of Israel could not have been more than two or three hours' journey from Bethlehem. David was at this time still engaged in attendance on his father's sheep; but his three eldest brothers were in the ranks of the army with Saul. Sent one day by his father to inquire of his brothers' welfare and to supply their wants, he reached the circle of baggage outside the camp at the moment when both armies were drawn up, and the battle-cry was already raised. The temptation was irresistible. He left the bread and parched corn and cheeses, which he had brought as presents for his brothers and their captain, with the guard of the baggage, and ran into the ranks where his brethren stood. As he spoke to them the Philistine champion came forth as usual to defy Israel. The Spirit which rested upon David moved him with indignation at such a reproach on Israel. "Who," he asked, "is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?" They told him of Saul's promise to enrich the man who should slay this enemy, and give him his daughter in marriage, and make his father's house free in Israel. Not heeding the taunts of Eliab, his eldest brother, who sneeringly rebuked his presumption, and, in effect, bade him return and mind his sheep on the downs of Bethlehem, David repeated his inquiries till his words came to the ears of the king. Called into the presence of Saul, he said, "Let no man's heart fail because of him: thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine." Not with proud contempt, but with generous anxiety, Saul sought to dissuade him from his purpose, saying, "Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him; for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth." But the young shepherd was not to be dissuaded. He had his deeds of valor against wild beasts, not to boast of, but to plead in support of his faith, for his conclusion is: "The Lord hath delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. And Saul said unto David, Go, and the Lord be with thee." The king would have armed David with his own armor. But when it was tried it did not fit him, and he very wisely laid it aside and determined to go forth with the weapons which he best knew how to use. Accordingly, with his shepherd's staff in his left hand and his

sling in the right, and five smooth stones which he had chosen as he walked across the ravine in his pouch, he appeared before the giant.

It is worth while to mark certain qualities of this ruddy youth who now stands forth as the champion of his people. His hope of victory cannot rest, like that of his antagonist, on his stature, his strength, or his armor. What was there in David that enabled him to undertake, with full confidence of success, what no man in all the armies of Israel dare face? The answer is to be found in the spirit that animated him. This spirit is brought to view in the narrative, in four of its aspects :—

1. *His Meekness.* When his elder brother Eliab sneeringly assailed him with a contemptuous question about "those few sheep" which he had left at Bethlehem, David kept his temper and answered quietly. He had won victories over himself before he thought of securing one over the Philistine giant. On this point Dr. Taylor says: "Probably this was not the first time that Eliab attempted to lord it over him, for unhappily it is only too common for the senior in a family to tyrannize over and torment the juniors; but David kept himself calm, and, like Another, in a yet more trying hour, 'when he was reviled, he reviled not again.' 'He that ruleth his spirit is greater than he that taketh a city;' and to my thinking this calmness of soul under Eliab's taunt was a greater thing in David than his boldness before the giant. I do not, of course, in thus emphasizing David's meekness, extenuate the rudeness of Eliab. On the contrary, it was worthy of all reprobation; but David felt that he was called not to fight with Eliab in this matter, but with himself, and so he held his peace. Let us try to imitate his example, and when we are assailed in our home, or beyond it, with scorn and derision, let us remember that our real conflict in such a case is not with the scorner, but with ourselves. Let our effort be put forth not to silence him, but to control ourselves, and then we shall succeed in obtaining a victory over both."

2. *His Wisdom.* This is manifest in his choice of weapons for the fight. Saul, who seems to have had no conception of the case beyond this, that force must be met by force,—that as the giant was encased in armor, so must David be, if he is successfully to battle with him, would have the young shepherd don his own. David tried it on in deference to the monarch's suggestion, but wisely laid it aside and chose the method of warfare adapted to his own size and strength, and that with which he was familiar. Herein the wisdom of the young shepherd shines. It is sometimes represented that by this choice he lessened his chances of success. On the contrary, by it he took the only possible way to success. If it came to fighting in close quarters, as it must have done if David was encased in armor, the giant would have proved more than a match for him. Being free he could use his sling which had been with him in many a day of his shepherd life, and so he could begin the attack from a distance. He knew how to put a smooth stone

from the brook straight and swift to its mark, and however thoroughly shielded by his armor Goliath might be, he could not fight without eyes nor see without exposing them somewhat to such a missile as a small smooth stone. David made no blunder in his choice. His wisdom had much to do with his victory. Very much of every man's success in the battle of life depends upon the wisdom he displays in his choice of methods and weapons. No amount of dependence upon God or help which he will render can supersede the necessity for care at this point. Take to arm you for the fight the weapon adapted to your strength. Do not undertake more than you are able for. Many a man has become the prey of his enemy just because he has persisted in putting in for the fight a larger man's armor, and in using a sword which he had not power to swing.

3. *His Faith.* David believed in God, and in the covenant which God had made with Israel. He was not afraid of the giant, because he felt that God was in him and around him. He remembered how God had delivered him from the paw of the lion and the bear, and he believed he would help him now. This was the great secret of his courage and coolness. While he chose his method of warfare as carefully as if he had to fight alone, he trusted in God as fully as if he could do nothing, and God must do it all. In all difficulties and conflicts of life let us follow his example. Make use of all means and put forth every effort carefully and wisely, as if our salvation depended alone on our own exertions, and all the time put our trust in God as completely as if he alone must work out deliverance for us.

4. *His Humility.* Here was the secret of the Divine help which gave David the courage to stand before Goliath,—he went forth not for his own glory, but for the honor of Israel's God. This quality characterized him throughout. When he had occasion in Saul's presence to refer to his victory over the wild beasts, he took no glory to himself, but declared that the Lord had delivered him. And now as he stands in the presence of the vaunting Philistine, hear him exclaim, "This day will the Lord deliver thee into my hand; and all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the Lord's." We can thus claim God's help, only when we are seeking God's glory.

III. THE COMBAT.—The champion of the Philistines stalked down into the valley, and looking about saw the youth, ruddy and fair, who had come out to meet him. He despised him. "Am I a dog," said he, "that thou comest to me with staves?" He manifestly felt himself insulted. "And the Philistine cursed David by the gods." Proudly, champion-like, he tells what he can and will do. "Come to me, and I will give thy flesh to the fowls of the air and to the beasts of the field." This language, taken in connection with the issue, furnishes one more illustration of the foolishness of boasting words; nothing can justify bragging about what one has done, much less about what one is going to do. David's reply, as we have

seen above, reveals the source of his courage. The issue of the combat is well known and needs no comment. There is one general lesson from the whole narrative. Goliath may stand for the evil that is in the world, against which we are all called to do battle if we would not be conquered and carried away captive by it. This evil is huge and strong; it often presents itself with social prestige, encased in armor, and full of vauntings. A spirit like David's, and here is the lesson, a spirit of meekness born of self-conquest, of wisdom, of faith, and of humility, is the only sure pledge of victory in this conflict.

DEC. 2, 1883.]

LESSON IX.

[1 SAM. 18: 1-16.]

DAVID'S ENEMY—SAUL.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“And David behaved himself wisely in all his ways: and the Lord was with him.”—Verse 14.

TIME.—B.C. 1063. **PLACE.**—Gibeah.

LESSON-TEXT AND NOTES.

1. And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul¹ of Jon'a-than was knit with the soul of Da'vid, and Jon'a-than² loved him as his own³ soul.

¹ Gen. 44: 30.² Ver. 3; chap. 19: 2; 20: 17; 2 Sam. 1: 26.³ Deut. 13: 6.

1. **When he had made an end of speaking unto Saul.**—That is, after the interview mentioned in the last verse of the preceding chapter, in which David informed Saul of his father. All their conversation on that occasion is not recorded, for it is manifest that that verse contains but a very small part of it. Enough is given, however, to acquaint us with the main subject of their conversation.—*Terry*. **The soul of Jonathan, the son of Saul, was knit with the soul of David.**—Literally “bound to.” The same forcible phrase occurs Gen. 44: 30, of Jacob's love for Benjamin.—*Cook*. **Loved him as his own soul.**—Thus commenced that attachment which is the first Biblical instance of a romantic friendship, such as was common afterwards in Greece, and has been since in Christendom; and is remarkable, both as giving its sanction to these, and as filled with a pathos of its own, which has been imitated but never surpassed in modern works of fiction. Each found in each the affection that he found not in his own family.—*Stanley*. On the part of Jonathan it was the more remarkable, inasmuch as David became his rival for the throne. But even after this became well known Jonathan's love never cooled, but rather warmed with intenser devotion to his friend, and he often gave aid and comfort to the son of Jesse in the time of his persecution (chap 23: 17). Well might the psalmist king

2. And Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father's house.

3. Then Jon'a-than and Da'vid made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul.

4. And Jon'a-than stripped himself⁴ of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to Da'vid, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle.

5. And Da'vid went out

whithersoever Saul sent him, and behaved himself wisely: and Saul set him over the men of war, and he was accepted in the sight of all the people, and also in the sight of Saul's servants.

6. And it came to pass as they came, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Phi-lis'tines, that⁵ the women came out of all the cities of Is'ra-el, singing and dancing, to meet king Saul

⁴ Gen. 41:42.

⁵ Ex. 15:20; Judg. 11:34.

say in his requiem over the fallen hero (2 Sam. 1:26), "Thy love for me was wonderful, passing the love of women."—Terry.

2. Saul would let him go no more home.—He was established as a permanent resident at court.—J. F. & B.

3. Then Jonathan and David made a covenant.—Such covenants of brotherhood are frequent in the East. They are ratified by certain ceremonies, and in presence of witnesses, that the persons covenanting will be sworn brothers for life.—J. F. & B.

4. Jonathan stripped himself of the robe.—The upper coat or cloak. His garments.—Rather, his armor, as the word is rendered, chap. 17:39. This, we are immediately told, consisted of his sword, bow, and girdle.—Terry. The act was at once a ratification of their compact and a public mark of honor. See Gen. 41:42; Esther 6:8.—Kirkpatrick. To receive any part of the dress which had been worn by a sovereign, or his eldest son and heir, is deemed in the East the highest honor which can be conferred on a subject.—J. F. & B.

5. David went out, etc.—David was appointed to some post of command, and "went out" upon military expeditions. In these "he behaved himself wisely"—the word combines the ideas of prudence and consequent success, and in spite of this sudden promotion, which might naturally excite the jealousy of the courtiers, won their good-will. This verse anticipates and describes summarily facts which are mentioned again in vs. 13-16 in their proper place.—Kirkpatrick.

6. And it came to pass.—The narrative has made a digression to relate the circumstances of David's permanent reception into Saul's service, the commencement of the friendship between him and Jonathan, and his ultimate promotion and success. It now goes back to relate the welcome which David received when the army returned in triumph from the successful completion of the Philistine war. Ch. 18:6 is to be read (as it actually stands in the Septuagint) in connection with 17:54, though some time may have elapsed, during which the army was occupied in following up its first success.—Kirkpatrick. All the cities of Israel.—All those near which the returning army passed. Singing and dancing.—According to the custom of the Hebrew women after great victories,

with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of music.

7. And the women answered *one another* as they played, and said Saul hath⁶ slain his thousands, and Da'vid his ten thousands.

8. And Saul was very wroth,⁷ and the saying displeased him; and he said, They have ascribed unto Da'vid ten thou-

sands, and to me they have ascribed *but* thousands: and *what* can he have more but the kingdom.⁸

9. And Saul eyed Da'vid from that day and forward.

10. And it came to pass on the morrow, that the evil spirit⁹ from God came upon Saul, and he prophesied¹⁰ in the midst of the house: and

⁶ Chap. 21 : 11.

⁷ Prov. 27 : 4 ; Eccl. 4 : 4.

⁸ Chap. 15 : 28.

⁹ Chap. 16 : 14.

¹⁰ Chap. 19 : 24 ; Acts 16 : 16.

Compare Ex. 15 : 20 ; Judg. 11 : 34. — *Terry*. With tabrets, like our tambourine. Instruments of music. — *Margin*, three-stringed instruments. The triangle is probably intended. — *Terry*.

7. **The women answered one another.** — They formed themselves into two choirs, which sang in alternate or responsive strophes. The chorus was, **Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands.** The Hebrew women were merely paying the customary congratulations to David as the deliverer of their country ; but they committed a great indiscretion by praising a subject at the expense of their sovereign. — *J. F. & B.*

8. **Saul was very wroth.** — The sensitive soul of Saul, now all the more inclined to be suspicious, since Samuel had foretold the taking of the kingdom from him, took offence at the implied preference of David to himself, and saw, perhaps for the first time, in the youthful Bethlehemite, that "neighbor better than himself" to whom his kingdom was to be given. . . . Let it be observed, too, that there was in this not only hatred of David, but also a defiant determination to circumvent and defeat the published purpose of the Almighty. — *W. M. Taylor*. **What can he have, etc.** — Rather, "*There is only the kingdom left for him.*" Compare for the same sentiment 1 Kings 2 : 22. "A king (says Camden) brooketh no companion, and majesty more heavily taketh injuries to heart," — *Cook*.

9. **Eyed.** — That is, looked askance at, or viewed with envy and suspicion, — *Elliot*.

10. **The evil spirit from God came upon Saul.** — A wicked spiritual power came upon him as the opposite of the good, holy spirit which he had once possessed, and goaded him to rage and madness, finding its occasion in the conflict within his soul and in the passionateness of his nature, which, after the Spirit of the Lord left him, was unbridled. It came on Saul *from the Lord* : that is, the Lord gave him over to the power and might of this spirit as punishment for his obedience and defiant self-will ; for this reason this spirit is called in this place, and in 16 : 15, 16, "an evil spirit of God," and in 16 : 23 simply "a spirit of God." — *Erdmann*. **He prophesied.** — The word prophecy "describes an *estatic* condition due to supernatural influence good or evil" : the result in the one case being prophetic inspiration or religious enthusiasm ; in the other,

Da'vid played with his hands as at other times: and *there was a javelin*¹¹ in Saul's hand.

11. And Saul cast the javelin: for he said, I will smite Da'vid even to the wall *with it*. And Da'vid avoided¹² out of his presence twice.

12. And Saul was afraid of Da'vid, because the Lord was with him, and was departed from Saul.

13. Therefore Saul removed him from him, and made him

his captain over a thousand; and he went out and came in before the people.

14. And Da'vid behaved himself wisely in all his ways: and the Lord *was with him*.

15. Wherefore when Saul saw that he behaved himself very wisely, he was afraid of him.

16. But all Is'ra-el and Ju'dah loved Da'vid, because he went¹³ out and came in before them.

¹¹ Chap. 19: 9, 10; 20: 33.

¹² Ps. 37: 32, 33; Isa. 54: 17.

¹³ Numb. 27: 17; 2 Sam. 5: 2; 1 Kings 3: 7.

raving madness.—*Kirkpatrick*. David . . . played as at other times.—Seeking, as before (chap. 16: 16), to quell the mental ravings of the king, and drive out the demon that possessed him.—*Terry*. And there was a javelin in Saul's hand.—Render, *And the spear was in Saul's hand*. The spear served as a sceptre, and was the symbol of royalty. The king held it in his hand when he sat in council (22: 6) or in his house (19: 9); it was kept by his side when he sat at table (20: 33); stuck in the ground by his pillow as he slept in camp (26: 7).—*Kirkpatrick*.

11. Cast the javelin.—By comparing this passage with 19: 10, it would appear that on the first occasion Saul did not actually cast the javelin, but only brandished it to take aim at David, and that he escaped before Saul actually cast it. The word rendered *cast* is probably capable of being so understood.—*Cook*.

12. Saul was afraid of David.—He became sensible that he was fighting against God, and this feeling bred terror, and continued to disturb him more and more.—*Terry*.

13. Therefore Saul removed him from him.—Sent him away from the court. And made him his captain over a thousand.—Gave him a military commission, which was intended to be an honorable exile. But this post of duty served only to draw out before the public the extraordinary and varied qualities of his character, and to give him a stronger hold of the people's affections.—*J. F. & B.* What was summarily mentioned by anticipation in v. 5 is here related with more detail in the order of time.—*Kirkpatrick*.

14, 15. Behaved himself wisely.—See note, v. 5. The Lord was with him.—He carried out military enterprises, and that so wisely and prosperously, that the blessing of the Lord rested upon all he did. But these successes on David's part increased Saul's fear of him, whereas all Israel and Judah came to love him as their leader. David's success in all that he took in hand compelled Saul to promote him; and his standing with the people increased with his promotion.—*Kitto*.

16. Because, etc.—They did not love him *because* he went out and

came in before the people; but this circumstance explains how it was that he was known to them. Had he continued to be in Saul's household he would have been little known, but as captain of a thousand he was brought into public life. — *Cook*.

ANALYSIS AND EXPOSITION.

Introduction.—David's victory over Goliath was followed by most decisive consequences. When the Philistines beheld the fall of their champion they fled, and were pursued by the army of Israel, with great slaughter, as far as Gath, and even to the gates of Ekron, whence the victors returned to spoil the camp of their enemies. David held as trophies the head, the armor, and the sword of the fallen Philistine. The first he exposed at Jerusalem; the second he put in his own tent; and the last he laid up in the tabernacle at Nob. Nor were the consequences to David personally less decisive. His victory was the turning point in his life. When the young champion of Israel had gone forth to the combat, Saul had asked Abner whose son he was, but Abner could not tell him. After the victory Saul made the same inquiry of David himself, "and David answered, I am the son of thy servant Jesse the Bethlehemite." The king evidently regarded this deliverer of Israel as too valuable a man to be leading a shepherd life at Bethlehem; "and Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father's house" (17:51-58; 18:2).

"Two things mentioned in this encounter," says Dr. Taylor, "are apt to perplex the general reader." The first is, that David took the Philistine's head to Jerusalem, and put his armor in his tent. Now, it is said by some that Jerusalem was not yet in the hands of the Israelites, but only came into their possession years afterward, when David conquered the Jebusites. But, as obviating this difficulty, we may remind you that it was not Jerusalem that David took from the Jebusites, but rather the stronghold of Zion, which was only a part of Jerusalem; and it is quite likely that before it was taken by David the other portions of the city were occupied by the Jews. Or, perhaps, the reference may simply be to Nob, the site of the Tabernacle, which, though in the territory of the tribe of Benjamin, was yet so near to Jerusalem as to be within sight of it. Then, as to the putting of the armor in his tent by David, we are not to suppose that this was meant by him as its ultimate destination, but we may well enough understand that it was put there for safety until he should have an opportunity of laying it up before the Lord in the Tabernacle; while, if any should be surprised that he should have a tent in the camp, considering that he had only come casually from Bethlehem, we may remove their astonishment by suggesting that, after so signal a victory as that which he had been honored to achieve, everything would be done to show him gratitude, and we may be sure that a tent would be put up at his disposal. The second and

more formidable difficulty is in connection with Saul's inquiry after David (17:55-58). Now how shall we account for Saul's non-recognition of David after having had him formerly at his court, and numbered among his armor-bearers (16:17-23)? Some would get rid of the difficulty by alleging that there has been a transposition of the narrative here, and that the account of David's minstrel visit to Gibeah should come in after the record of the incidents which have been before us now; but for the reasons which I formerly advanced I cannot accept this theory. Others think that in the state of mind in which Saul was when David played before him on the harp he would not be able to take any particular notice of him, and therefore when he saw him again might not recognize him. While others still suppose that the purpose of Saul's question was not to know who David was, but to inquire into the character and condition of his family, that he might make good the promise which he had made to the man that should slay the Philistine, to the effect that he would give him his daughter in marriage, and make his father's house free in Israel. This is the solution proposed by Keil, who says: "It was not the name of David's father alone that he wanted to discover, but what kind of a man he really was; and the question was put not merely in order that he might grant him exemption from taxes, but also that he might attach such a man to his court, since he inferred from the courage and bravery of the son the existence of similar qualities in the father. It is true that David merely replied, "The son of thy servant Jesse the Bethlehemite;" but it is evident from the expression in chapter 18:1: "When he had made an end of speaking unto Saul," that Saul conversed with him still further about his family affairs, since the very words imply a lengthened conversation. Dr. Kitto, however, is perhaps nearer the truth when he suggests that in the interval between David's appearance at court and his fighting with the giant, he had passed from early youth into manhood, and so grown, as it were, out of Saul's recognition. Here are his words: "You would scarcely know him for the same person that you saw some three years ago; he was then a growing youth, but he has now attained to greater fulness of stature, and to more firmly knit limbs; above all, his beard has grown, and to those who, like us, remove the beard as soon as it appears, the great difference produced by the presence of this appendage on the face of one who a year or two ago was a beardless youth is scarcely conceivable."

Lesson Topics.—I. David's Popularity. II. David's Peril.

I. DAVID'S POPULARITY (vs. 1-7).—The first results of David's victory over Goliath seemed likely to raise him to a permanent position of great honor, distinction, and happiness. For some time he might have appeared to have reached an elevation of rank and prosperity sufficient to satisfy his utmost ambition, or at least to render him an object of envy to all the

nation. He became, at the same time, the chosen associate and bosom friend of Jonathan, the son of Saul. This friendship will be the subject of our next lesson. It is sufficient to say here that Jonathan made a covenant with David, which was faithfully observed even when Saul became David's enemy, and according to the custom in such cases, clothed him with his own garments, to his sword and bow and girdle (vs. 1, 3, 4). This act was at once a ratification of their compact and a public mark of honor. He was admitted into the number of the king's most favored servants. The honorable position of Saul's armor-bearer, to which he was immediately raised, was ere long exchanged for that of commander of the king's body-guard, an officer only second to the commander-in-chief of his forces, and, like the latter, having the distinction, shared only with the presumptive heir to the throne, of a seat at the royal table. Nor did he enjoy only the honors and distinctions which can be conferred by the favor of the monarch; he was the idol of the nation. "He was accepted in the sight of all the people, and also in the sight of Saul's servants" (vs. 2, 5).

Such sudden elevation and popularity constituted a severe test of character. In some respects prosperity, especially when, as in this case, it comes suddenly, is a more trying ordeal than adversity. "One hour of summer sunshine produces greater corruption than the longest winter day." Change in position and fortune has made many a man proud, arrogant, insolent, and forgetful of his God. Sudden elevation has often intoxicated men. The atmosphere of sudden prosperity is dangerous, because it brings tendencies to just these hateful sins. There is, therefore, great need of wisdom and watchfulness at such times, lest we become puffed up and unmindful of God. Riches and honor, strength and learning, are good in themselves, and will be good for their possessor if they be fairly won. Human applause is sweet, and, in itself, harmless to him who has done something to deserve it. As all of them are the gifts, so are they also the blessings of God to those who can make a wise and sanctified use of them. In this important matter we may learn much from the example of David. He "behaved himself wisely" (v. 5). He did not permit himself to become over-elated by his sudden elevation and popularity. He had good sense enough to ballast his spirit, and with modest wisdom he bore the honors which were thrust upon him.

II. DAVID'S PERIL (vs. 8-16). — Reverse of fortune came to David, as it has come to many another, soon and suddenly. The envy of Saul was aroused against him. The seeds of that implacable hatred of the youth whom he had raised to so high a pinnacle of greatness, which at last took possession of Saul, and led to all the persecutions from which David suffered in the later years of the king's life, were very early sown. At the close of the campaign against the Philistines, in which David had played so distinguished a part, even if he did no more than kill Goliath, — but the presumption is that he had earned further honors in the pursuit of the enemy, — Saul returned in triumph

to Gibeah; and as the victorious army passed, the Hebrew maidens came out of every city to greet the victors. As they trooped forth, "singing and dancing, to meet King Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of music," they chanted in responsive chorus rhythmic lines appropriate to the occasion, and at the end of every strophe there came this refrain, sung by answering companies: "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands." This was a poisoned arrow in the heart of the king. It touched him in a most sensitive point, and he seems never to have forgotten or forgiven it. "And Saul was very wroth, and the saying displeased him; and he said, they have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed but thousands: and what can he have more but the kingdom?" Alas, what can be done for him who is consciously unworthy of the first praises, and yet cannot endure to miss them? Whence can help come to a spirit smitten with such grief? From that hour Saul viewed David with the evil eye, and the first effect of his envy and anger was to bring back his old malady. His fits of frenzy became charged with impulses of murder. David, as in former times, sought to soothe him with music, but the maniac monarch became only the more enraged, and twice aimed a javelin at him, and he escaped only by dexterously evading its point. This violence of frenzy soon settled down into a deliberate purpose to compass David's destruction, and he was placed by the king in a position where it was hoped his inexperience would provoke such opposition as would result in his death (v. 13).

This sudden peril and the change which came so suddenly constituted a still further test of character. David stood the test. As his popularity did not inflate him, his peril did not make him desperate or despairing. He kept cool; maintained a right spirit, "and behaved himself wisely in all his ways." Here again we shall do well to learn a lesson from the example of David. The key to his courage and wisdom lies in the fact that "the Lord was with him." The result of his course was that Saul feared while the people loved him. We shall in one form or other be called to meet the spirit of envy. We may not hope to attain to any position of success in this world without incurring the envy of little souls. "Shadows do not more naturally attend shining bodies than envy pursues worth and merit, always close at the very heels of them, and, like a sharp blighting east wind, still blasting and killing the noblest and most promising productions of virtue in their earliest bud, and, as Jacob did Esau, supplants them in their very birth. For what made Saul so implacably persecute David? Was it not the greatness of his valor and the glory of his actions, which drew after them the applause of the whole kingdom, and, consequently, the envy of the king himself? How comes history to tell us of so many assassinations of princes, downfalls of favorites, underminings and poisonings of great persons? Why, in most of these sad events, still only worth has been the crime and envy the executioner. What drew the blood of Cæsar.

banished Cicero, and put out the eyes of the brave and victorious Belisarius, but a merit too great for an emperor to reward and for envy to endure?"—*South*. Beware of an envious spirit. It makes men murderers in heart if not in act. Under its domination men cannot bear to hear any one praised but themselves, and feel as if all honor accorded to others was so much filched from themselves. The envious man suffers not only from the ills that befall himself, but also from the good that befalls others. "Envy is the daughter of pride, the author of revenge and murder, the perpetual tormentor of virtue. Envy is the filthy slime of the soul; a venom, a poison, a quicksilver, which consumeth the flesh and drieth up the marrow of the bones."—*Socrates*. It is said of a certain Greek that his envy resulted in his death, in this wise: "His fellow-citizens had erected a statue to one of their number, who was a celebrated victor in the public games. One of his rivals allowed his envy to master him to such a degree that he went forth, night after night, in order, if possible, to destroy that statue. After repeated efforts he at length succeeded in removing it from its pedestal, and it fell, and in its fall it caught and crushed him to death." An unintentional symbolic act was this, showing the suicidal action of envy on the soul. It is ever an element of misery, a burning coal which "comes hissing hot from hell."

The wise course for each of us is to do our duty in the fear of God, whatever the circumstances in which we are found; neither forgetting him in the hour of prosperity, nor despairing of him in the hour of peril, but trusting him with a constancy and completeness that will bring the consciousness of his presence with us. Let us learn to wait patiently God's time for the fulfilment of God's promises. David was anointed to be king, yet he served Saul faithfully. He who would rule with ability must first learn to serve with loyalty.

DEC. 9, 1883.]

LESSON X.

[1 SAM. 20: 32-42.]

DAVID'S FRIEND—JONATHAN.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"A man that hath friends must show himself friendly; and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother."—Prov. 18: 24.

TIME.—B.C. 1062. **PLACE.**—Near Gibeah.

LESSON-TEXT AND NOTES.

32. And Jon'a-than answered Saul his father, and said

32. **Jonathan answered Saul.**—See vs. 27-31. Though Jonathan knew as well as Saul that David was destined to sit upon the throne,

unto him, Wherefore¹ shall he be slain? what hath he done?

33. And Saul cast² a javelin to smite him: whereby³ Jon'-a-than knew that it was determined of his father to slay Da'vid.

34. So Jon'a-than arose from the table in fierce anger, and did eat no meat the second day of the month: for he was grieved for Da'vid, because

his father hath done him shame.

35. And it came to pass in the morning, that Jon'a-than went out into the field at the time appointed with Da'vid, and a little lad with him.

36. And he said unto his lad, Run, find out now the arrows which I shoot. And as the lad ran, he shot an arrow beyond him.

37. And when the lad was

¹ Chap. 19 : 5 ; Prov 31 : 8, 9 ; Matt. 27 : 23.

² Chap. 18 : 11.

³ Ver. 7.

he was not thereby either estranged from him or desirous of his death. So he stood up bravely in his friend's defence, asserting his innocence, and asking why he should be slain. This, however, only added fuel to the flame of Saul's evil passion. — *W. M. Taylor.*

33. **Saul cast a javelin, etc.** — Or *brandished it*, 18 : 11. We see here Saul's ungoverned violence. What a scene to enact before his whole court on a solemn feast day ! and what impolicy, with such dangerous neighbors as the Philistines, ever on the watch to alienate his own heroic son, and his chief warrior, and lay the seeds of disunion among his subjects at the same moment. — *Cook.* **Jonathan knew that it was determined . . . to slay David.** — He had before been disposed to attribute his father's acts of violence towards David to his madness, and the demon that at times possessed him ; but now he is convinced that David's suspicions of his bloody design (v. 3) are well-founded, and he arose from the table in a wild tumult of passion, and the next morning, true to his word, went forth to bid David fly. — *Terry.*

34. **He was grieved for David.** — The generosity of Jonathan's character is very apparent. He did not resent the injury and insult offered to himself so much as the wrong done his friend. — *Cook.* **Had done him shame.** — Saul had insulted and wronged David by publicly charging him with treasonable intentions (v. 31). — *Kirkpatrick.*

35. **In the morning**, of the third day, as had been agreed with David (see vs. 18-22). **A little lad.** — Who would not suspect the real purpose of Jonathan's shooting: a vivid touch of reality in the narrative. — *Kirkpatrick.*

36. **He said unto the lad, Run, find out now the arrows which I shoot.** — The direction given aloud to the attendant was the signal preconcerted with David. It implied danger. — *J. F. & B.* By sending the boy a good piece off to look for the arrows, Jonathan had a pretext for shouting to him in a very loud voice, such as David, in his hiding-place, could hear. The boy was an unwitting helper to David's cause ; and we are reminded how God makes men unconsciously advance his Son's kingdom. — *Hanna.* **He shot an arrow beyond him.** — So that the arrow went further than the servant had run. — *Erdmann.*

37. **Is not the arrow beyond thee ?** — Jonathan uses a question in-

come to the place of the arrow which Jon'a-than had shot, Jon'a-than cried after the lad, and said, *Is not the arrow beyond⁴ thee?*

38. And Jon'a-than cried after the lad, *Make speed, haste, stay not.* And Jon'a-than's lad gathered up the arrows, and came to his master.

39. But the lad knew not anything; only Jon'a-than and Da'vid knew the matter.

40. And Jon'a-than gave his artillery unto his lad, and said unto him, *Go, carry them to the city.*

41. *And as soon as the lad was gone Da'vid arose out of a place toward the south, and fell on his face to the ground,*

⁴ Vers. 21, 22.

stead of direct discourse (as in vs. 20-22) in order more certainly to make the boy believe that he was merely practising at a mark. While in vs. 20-22 this procedure is summarily described of *three* arrows, the account here is of *one*. The difference is not to be explained by the supposition that Jonathan shortened the affair and shot only once, because there was danger in delay, for the shooting of three arrows was a principal point in the agreement, and if there had been such need of haste the following parting scene could not have taken place. Rather we must suppose that Jonathan did so with *each* of the three arrows. Either Jonathan shot the arrows one right after another, or he thrice repeated it. — *Erdmann*.

38, 39. *Make speed, haste, stay not.* — Though these words appear to be addressed to the lad, yet they were spoken to David, indicating that his life was at stake, and only a prompt flight could save him. — *Clarke*. *The lad knew not anything.* — Of the secret sign they had made. — *Gray*.

40. *His artillery.* — That is, his bow and quiver. From Lat. *ars*, used in late Latin to mean "an implement," came the late Latin *artillaria*, and O. Fr. *artillerie*, "machines or equipments of war." The word was used of missile weapons long before the invention of gunpowder. — *Kirkpatrick*.

41. *As soon as the lad was gone.* — When the unfavorable sign had been given, which he knew would render his friend a fugitive, Jonathan could not resist the desire again to commune with him before he departed. — *Kitto*. *David arose out of a place toward the south.* — Literally, "from the side of the south," i.e. from a hiding-place to the south of the stone Ezel. But the expression is anomalous, and it is best to adopt the Septuagint reading, "from beside the heap of stones" as in v. 19. — *Kirkpatrick*. *David rose from the south side of the rock, where he had been concealed, the preceding affair having occurred on the north side, whence the boy returned to the city, which lay north of David's hiding-place, so that the latter was completely hid from him.* — *Erdmann*. *Fell on his face to the ground.* — It is, and was, the custom, in approaching a sovereign or prince, to pause and bow at regulated intervals. Xenophon ascribes the origin of the practice to Cyrus, but it was of earlier date, although he may have first introduced it among the Persians. David thus testified the respect to Jonathan's high station, in advancing to meet him; but when they came near, everything but their heart-brotherhood

and bowed himself three times; and they kissed one another, and wept one with another, until Da'vid exceeded.

42. And Jon'a-than said to Da'vid, Go⁵ in peace, forasmuch as we have sworn both of us in the name of the Lord, saying, the Lord be between

⁵ Chap. 1 : 17.

was forgotten. "They kissed one another, and wept one with another until David exceeded." But time was precious, and delay dangerous, so bidding each other hastily farewell, they separated, to have but one more stolen interview in life. — *Kitto*. **David exceeded.** — Literally, "David did greatly," — namely, wept violently aloud. For the construction comp. Joel 2 : 20, 21 ; Ps. 126 : 2, 3. — *Erdmann*. He was now about to become an exile from his friends, his wife, his kindred, the people of God, and all the solemnities of sacred worship. — *Patrick*. This is the culminating point in the mutual relations of the two friends, who furnish the eternal type of the perfection of noble friendship. In these last hours before their separation all the threads of their destinies, henceforth so widely different, are secretly woven together. As Jonathan here foresees, David afterwards obtains the kingdom; and, in accordance with his oath to his friend, he afterwards, when a powerful king, always spares the descendants of Jonathan, in grateful remembrance of his dearly loved friend, and never loses an opportunity of showing them kindness. We may well believe that when, in after years, David drew to his court the posterity of Jonathan, he often told them himself of these last events before their separation, with which no one but the two friends could be acquainted, and that our present narrative springs ultimately from this source. — *Ewald*.

42. **Jonathan said, etc.** — Jonathan's parting word is : (1) A wish for peace or blessing, and (2) conjuring him that the covenant of friendship be forever maintained. — *Erdmann*. **We have sworn . . . in the name of the Lord.** — David designates the covenant of friendship which Jonathan had made with him (18 : 1 sq.) as one which he made with him *in the Lord* (comp. 23 : 18). It was, therefore, not a friendship which rested merely on mutual good feeling, but was based on a recognized common union of heart with the living God. Jonathan's heart clung in firm faith and trust to the Lord; this was the root of his heroic courage and his victorious prowess (comp. 14 : 6); this fresh power of faith, which elevated and sanctified his whole being, won him David's regard and love. David's whole life-course showed Jonathan the direct wonderful gracious leading of the Lord, to which he humbly submitted himself. The two hearts were one in looking to and hoping in the living God, in humble obedience to His holy will. This was the foundation of their communion of love and life in the Lord. — *Erdmann*. **Jonathan went into the city.** — From which one may infer, what the after-history also indicates, that Jonathan's filial duty and patriotism prevented a complete rupture with his father. Jonathan's conduct in this, as in everything, was most admirable. — *Cook*. The love of Jonathan for David we shall have occasion to follow in David's history. But we do

me and thee, and between my seed and thy seed forever. And he arose and departed;

and Jon'a-than went into the city.

not, perhaps, sufficiently appreciate the devotion of Jonathan for his unfortunate father. From the time that he first appears he is Saul's constant companion. He is always present at the royal table. He holds the office afterwards known as that of "the king's friend." The deep attachment of the father and the son is everywhere implied. Jonathan can only go on his dangerous expedition by concealing it from Saul (1 Sam. 14: 1). Saul's vow is confirmed, and its tragic effect deepened by his feeling for Jonathan—"though it be Jonathan my son" (14: 31). Jonathan cannot bear to believe his father's enmity to David. "My father will do nothing, great or small, but that he will show it me; and why should my father hide this thing from me? It is not so" (20: 2). To him, if to any one, the frenzy of the king was amenable. "Saul hearkened unto the voice of Jonathan" (19: 6). . . . Now, that the final parting was to come, he took his lot with his father's decline, not with his friend's rise; and "in death they were not divided."—*Stanley*.

ANALYSIS AND EXPOSITION.

Introduction.—Even when the murderous frenzy was not upon him, King Saul was haunted by a jealous fear of David, which increased the prosperity of the young warrior. He began to plot systematically against his life. Presenting his elder daughter Merab as a prize, he urged David to win her by a warlike expedition against the Philistines, hoping he might fall in battle; and, though David was successful, when the time for the marriage arrived Merab was given to another. Meanwhile Saul's second daughter, Michal, had become enamored of David, and though the king gave her to him, it was upon such a condition as he thought must cost him his life. His wife proved, like Jonathan, his faithful friend; for which Saul only feared and hated him the more, and "became David's enemy continually." In all this David's prudence did not forsake him and "the Lord was with David." He "behaved himself more wisely than all the servants of Saul; so that his name was much set by" (18: 17-30). At length, having been preserved from death only by the devotions of his wife Michal, who deceived the officers charged to slay him by placing in his bed an image enveloped in a net of goat's hair, and let him down from a window, David fled to Naioth. Here he once more met the prophet Samuel, and probably Nathan and Gad. When the messengers sent by Saul to take him saw the company of the prophets prophesying, with Samuel at their head, the Spirit of God fell upon them also, and they prophesied. This was repeated thrice; and at last Saul went himself, but on drawing near to Naioth was so affected by the sacred strains of the prophets, and the Spirit of God which came upon him, that he could not resist the prophetic impulse. He stripped of his outer garments, and, falling

down before Samuel, he prophesied all that day and night. Well might this melancholy exhibition of reluctant homage, so different from his first willing reception of the Divine Spirit, cause the repetition of the surprise then uttered in scornful incredulity, but now grounded in sad experience, which gave new force to the proverb, "Is Saul also among the prophets?" (chap. 19). Thus the danger to David was for a time averted. Saul seems to have returned to Gibeah, professing to be reconciled to him, and expecting him to resume his place at court. At this point the incident occurred which culminates in our lesson.

Lesson Topics.—I. The History of Jonathan's Friendship. II. The Elements of Jonathan's Friendship.

I. THE HISTORY OF JONATHAN'S FRIENDSHIP.—There is a touch almost of romance in the ardent attachment of these two young men. It has about it all the fervor, the impetuosity, the sincerity so natural to early friendships. Jonathan seems to have been the weaker nature; he clung with the most tender fondness to David, who must have had a certain strength of resolve and vigor of action, which are always attractive to characters as susceptible as Jonathan. And it was this beautiful trust and noble constancy which won David's heart. Let us not trouble ourselves about the philosophy of this illustrious friendship. It were useless to discuss how soul is knit to soul in so strong and blessed a bond. It is sufficient to say that we mysteriously, and by subtle affinities, on which no metaphysical anatomist can lay his investigating finger, do find that there is something in the character of the mind and heart of the person we love which responds to something in us, or which satisfies a want of which we are conscious. Friendships spring up often, we can hardly explain why, which are most real, most helpful, very precious, and frequently lasting. We may profitably consider the history of this friendship of Jonathan and David, and its characteristics.

The affectionate regard of the king's son for the young warrior seems to have been awakened immediately after the victory of the latter over the Philistine giant, and during the interview between David and Saul, which followed that important event. Jonathan was present at that interview, and something in David's personal appearance, or bearing, or conversation, or, what is more probable, in all these combined, touched his soul, "and it came to pass, when David had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David; and Jonathan loved him as his own soul." A covenant of mutual friendship was made between them. But this was but a faint expression of Jonathan's love. He cannot do too much for David, his new friend. He stripped himself of his outer robe and gave it to David, and of his military equipage, even to his sword, and bow, and girdle (18:1-4).

The fidelity of Jonathan was soon called into exercise by the insane rage of his father against David. After David became

his son-in-law Saul still continued to seek his life. He no longer concealed his purpose to compass his destruction, and did not scruple to suggest to Jonathan and all his servants that David should be put out of the way. Faithful to his friend, Jonathan warned David of the impending danger, and advised him to conceal himself, while he should intercede for him with his father. His remonstrance with his father is earnest and eloquent, wise and manly, and breathes the very spirit of the truest friendship. He contrived that David should overhear the conversation so as to be assured of Saul's real feelings. Jonathan's intercession was successful and resulted in the restoration of David to Saul's favor (19:1-7).

This reconciliation, however, lasted but a short time. "There was war again," and David's exploits in this new war with the Philistines provoked the fury of Saul once more, so that David fled to Naioth. Saul followed him, and, though he professed to be again reconciled to David, the latter felt that he could not wisely put himself in the king's power, — that there was but a step between him and death, and only left his refuge at Ramah to appeal to Jonathan against his father's persecution. His friend did not fail him, but consented to a decisive experiment by which to ascertain the real feelings of the king; and they arranged a meeting, at which David was to learn his fate. At this interview the friendship of the young men was confirmed, after the manner of the time by a renewal of the solemn covenant made between them, with a remarkable addition on Jonathan's part, evidently in anticipation of David's succession to the crown: "And thou shalt not only while I yet live, show me the kindness of the Lord, that I die not: But also thou shalt not cut off thy kindness from my house forever; no, not when the Lord hath cut off the enemies of David every one from the face of the earth" (vs. 14, 15). David solemnly ratified this covenant for his descendants as well as himself, and he afterwards observed it faithfully. The next day was the feast of the new moon, which would naturally bring Saul's family together, — David included. But instead of appearing at the king's table, he hid himself in the place agreed upon with Jonathan. In the execution of what he had undertaken for David, Jonathan's friendship was put to a severe test, but his fidelity remained unmoved. In the event he found Saul bitter and desperate, not to say infuriated with madness. With an insulting reference to his birth, which may have been mere frantic invective, or may refer to something in the history of Abinoam or Rizpah which we do not know, Saul taunted his son with his friendship for David, warned him that his own interests as heir-apparent to the throne were at stake, and commanded him to send and fetch David, "for he shall surely die." Jonathan once more remonstrated. "Wherefore shall he be slain? What hath he done? But he was no longer successful. Saul hurled his spear at him, as he had repeatedly hurled it at David, and Jonathan left the room in fierce anger at his father and deeply grieved for his friend. The next morn-

ing he kept his appointment with David, and by the signal agreed upon informed him that there was no longer peace or safety for him in Saul's house. David came out from his hiding-place; "and they kissed one another, and wept one with another, until David exceeded. And Jonathan said to David, Go in peace, forasmuch as we have sworn both of us in the name of the Lord, saying, The Lord be between me and thee, and between my seed and thy seed forever. And he arose and departed; and Jonathan went into the city" (vs. 24-42).

The friends met only once more. Far away in the forest of Ziph, David and a little band of six hundred followers were moving from one lurking-place to another, while Saul was in constant search of them. It was at this juncture that the last interview took place between them. Here is the account of it: "And Jonathan, Saul's son, arose, and went to David into the wood, and strengthened his hand in God. And he said unto him, Fear not: for the hand of Saul my father shall not find thee: and thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be next unto thee; and that also Saul my father knoweth. And they two made a covenant before the Lord. And David abode in the wood, and Jonathan went to his house."

Jonathan's friendship was highly appreciated by David, and had a powerful influence over his life. It more than once saved him from laying violent hands on Saul; and it brightened and comforted many an hour of weary exile. He never forgot the kindness and devotion of his friend, and long years afterward he took pleasure in doing good to the descendants of Jonathan. How profoundly he felt when death smote Jonathan on Mount Gilboa every one must realize as he listens to the heart-broken wail, "I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me; thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of woman." Eulogy higher than that David felt he could not pass.

II. THE ELEMENTS OF JONATHAN'S FRIENDSHIP.—Here is an illustration of genuine friendship which has never been surpassed, if it has ever been equalled, in the history of men. And as the elements of such friendship must be identical, however the circumstances of individuals may vary, it must be interesting to inquire what those elements are. If we turn to the history with this inquiry in mind we shall be impressed with the fact that Jonathan's friendship —

1. *Was founded in community of sentiment with its object.* While there were striking differences of character and circumstance between David and Jonathan, there were also striking points of similarity, indicating oneness of sentiment. For instance, they were one in their faith in God, and in their devotion to his will. Jonathan's exploit at Michmash, in the courage and simple faith in God which were displayed, is scarcely surpassed by David's victory over Goliath. The very same qualities of character were brought into exercise in both. This oneness of spirit is one of the principal elements of a strong and noble friendship. We can never hope to understand the value and

blessedness of this relationship unless the one to whom we essay to give our heart's confidence has something that answers to our own nature, or our own desire. We may not possess what another has, but we may so admire it and long for it that we are naturally led into the close association implied in friendship. Thus natures opposite in many things may become staunchest friends. But there should be similarity of fundamental beliefs and sympathy of religious life.

2. *Was entirely free from selfishness.* Jonathan was the king's son and heir-apparent to the throne of Israel. David was a shepherd of Bethlehem, who had, it is true, greatly distinguished himself by his slaughter of the giant. But the former could have nothing to gain from the latter. His friendship for David was therefore an unselfish thing. He was attracted to the young warrior not by anything that he had to give, but by himself—his courage, his faith in God. His affection was disinterested. This is an ever-present element in every true friendship. Self-seeking is utterly incompatible with it. The two things cannot live in the same bosom. The aim of friendship is to give, not to gain. We may not expect to get all and give nothing—to have affection and confidence lavished upon us as though it were our right, and return none. Not so will we acquire and keep friends. We must show ourselves friendly, must be absolutely disinterested.

3. *It was untainted by wrong feeling.* Jonathan was peculiarly exposed to temptation to envy and jealousy of David. They were both young men who had displayed great military skill and courage. Jonathan was the older and first in the field. David emerges from his sheepfolds and suddenly becomes the idol of the nation. It takes great strength of character and no ordinary friendship to rejoice in the rise to a position equal to or surpassing our own of one who is in the same calling with us. Just that Jonathan was called to do, and just that he did. Then he was the heir to his father's throne, and he soon became acquainted with the fact that Samuel had anointed David to succeed Saul, but even this awakened no jealousy in his bosom, nor disturbed the sweetness and devotion of his friendship in the least. He could say, and did say, "Thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be next unto thee." Here is another necessary element of genuine friendship. The least shadow of envy or jealousy or suspicion or want of confidence will wither it.

4. *It was constant and self-sacrificing.* Jonathan's devotion was maintained in the face of personal dangers and even against his father. This latter must have been a most severe test. The whole history implies, without expressing, the deep attachment of the father and son. (See notes on v. 42.) All this serves to show the affection of father and son, and enables us to see how hard it must have been for Jonathan to be true to his friend, who was his father's enemy. But self-sacrifice belongs to all such friendship as Jonathan's for David.

DEC. 16, 1883.]

LESSON XI.

[1 SAM. 24: 1-17.

DAVID SPARING HIS ENEMY.

GOLDEN TEXT. — "But I say unto you, Love your enemies; bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you." — Matt. 5: 44.

TIME. — B.C. 1061. **PLACE.** — Engedi.

LESSON-TEXT AND NOTES.

1. And it came to pass when Saul was returned¹ from following the Philistines, that it was told him, saying, Behold, Da'vid is in the wilderness of En'ged-i.

2. Then Saul took three thousand chosen men out of all Is'ra-el, and went to² seek David and his men upon the rocks of the wild goats.

¹ Chap. 23: 28, 29.

² Ps. 38: 12.

1. **When Saul was returned from following the Philistines.** — This was another of those bitter contests with that enemy against whom Saul was obliged to carry on war all his days (chap. 14: 52); but how long this war with the Philistines lasted, and of its relative importance, we are not informed. — *Terry*. **Engedi.** — The present Ain Jidy, "Fountain of the Kid," about the middle of the west shore of the Dead Sea, about thirteen miles northeast of Maon, on the border of the wilderness of Judah, in a mountainous region, with limestone soil, with precipitous rocks and deep gorges, which run towards the Dead Sea, and with many caves in the limestone hills. It belonged to the then few very fruitful regions of the wilderness of Judah. — *Erdmann*.

2. **Saul took three thousand chosen men.** — The obstinacy of Saul's adherence to his bloody plan against David appears in the fact that immediately after his campaign against the Philistines, perhaps even before they were completely overthrown, he again sends out spies against David, and sets out with a large body of warriors (3,000) in order to seize him. He sees in him a rival king, against whom he must march fully equipped, and whom he must destroy by a superior force of disciplined troops. — *Erdmann*. **David and his men.** — They were not villains and freebooters, as some have thought them, but victims of misrule and misfortune, who could preserve liberty and life only by flight and seclusion, as David had saved his. Among them were Gad, the prophet and successor of Samuel, and Abiathar, the priest, with the high-priest's ephod. Some of them were splendid heroes, and became eminent in the kingdom. See 2 Sam. 23: 8-39; 1 Chron. 11: 10-47. They made no war except on the enemies of Israel. Against Saul they stood only on the defensive, and they were always the protectors of the people in their vicinity. — *D. A. Whedon*. **Upon the rocks of the wild goats.** — This is probably not a proper name for some particular rocks, but a general

3. And he came to the sheepcotes by the way, where *was* a cave; and Saul went in to³ cover his feet: and Da'vid and his men remained in the sides of the cave.⁴

4. And the men of Da'vid said unto him, Behold⁵ the day of which the Lord said

unto thee, Behold, I will deliver thine enemy unto thine hand, that thou mayest do to him as it shall seem good unto thee. Then Da'vid arose, and cut off the skirt of Saul's robe privily.

5. And it came to pass afterward, that David's heart⁶

³ Judges 3 : 24.

⁴ Ps. 57 : 142.

⁵ Chap. 26 : 8-11.

⁶ 2 Sam. 24 : 10 ; 1 John 3 : 20, 21.

term applied to the rocks of that locality on account of the number of wild-goats and chamois that were to be found in all that region, as mountain-goats are still. — *Keil*.

3. **The sheepcotes . . . where was a cave.** — I have seen hundreds of them around the mouth of caverns, and, indeed, there is scarcely a cave in the land whose location will admit of being thus occupied, but has such "a cote" in front of it, generally made by piling up loose stones into a circular wall, which is covered with thorns as a further protection against robbers and wild beasts. During cold storms, in the night, the flocks retreat into the cave, but at other times they remain in the enclosed cote. The cavern may have been full of them when the king entered ; nor would his presence have disturbed them — as I have found on many occasions — while their constant tramping about the sleeping Saul would have rendered the approach of David unnoticed. — *W. M. Thompson*. **Remained in the sides.** — Rather "*were in the sides of the cave-dwelling or abiding there.*" Saul had come unwittingly to the very place where David and his men dwelt. Some of these caverns are very deep and spacious. Any one near the mouth of the cave would be visible, but those in the recesses would be quite in the dark and invisible, especially if the incident occurred at night. The LVIIth Psalm, according to the title, was composed on this occasion. — *Cook*. The cave at Engedi, traditionally pointed out as that in which David and his followers took refuge, is said by the Arabs to extend to Hebron, *i. e.* eighteen miles. It has been penetrated for about five hundred yards, and the chambers and passages seemed without end. — *Elliot*.

4. **The day of which the Lord said, etc.** — This was the version by David's men of such Divine predictions as 1 Sam. 15 : 28 ; 16 : 1, 12. Jonathan's words, 20 : 15 ; 23 : 17, show clearly that these predictions were known, and the version of them here given was a very natural one in the mouth of "David's men." Or the words may be rendered, *Behold the day is come, on which the Lord hath said to thee (i. e. now says to thee, by this significant act of His Providence), Behold I am giving thine enemy into thy hand, etc.* See v. 10. **The skirt, etc.** — Literally, *the wing* of Saul's robe, whether on Saul at the time, or whether laid aside by him while in the cave, does not appear certain. — *Cook*.

5. **David's heart smote him.** — Here *heart* is used for *conscience*, as often in Hebrew. See Prov. 4 : 23 ; Eccl. 7 : 22. — *Wordsworth*. He probably deemed it like an act of high treason, so deeply rooted in the

smote him, because he had cut off Saul's skirt.

6. And he said unto his men, The ⁷ Lord forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the Lord's anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he is the anointed ⁸ of the Lord.

7. So Da'vid stayed ⁹ his servants with these words, and suffered them not to rise against Saul. But Saul rose up out of the cave, and went on his way.

8. Da'vid also arose afterward, and went out of the cave, and cried after Saul, saying, My lord the king. And when Saul looked behind him, Da'vid stooped with his face to the earth, and bowed himself.

9. And Da'vid said to Saul, Wherefore hearest ¹⁰ thou men's words, saying, Behold, Da'vid seeketh thy hurt?

10. Behold, this day thine eyes have seen how that the Lord had delivered thee to-

⁷ 1 Kings 21 : 3.

⁸ 2 Sam. 1 : 14.

⁹ Ps. 7 : 4; Matt. 5 : 44; Rom. 12 : 17-21.

¹⁰ Lev. 19 : 16; Prov. 18 : 8; 26 : 20-22; 29 : 12; Eccl. 7 : 21.

hearts of the Israelites was the idea of their king and lord as the representative of God on earth. In addition to that, Saul was David's father-in-law — father of his wife. — *Krummacher*.

6. The Lord forbid that I should do. — This rightness of feeling, so frequent in the history of David, this spontaneous, undeliberating truthfulness of expression and action, only possible to the man whose heart is essentially right, falls refreshingly upon the sense like the gush of waters to one who plods thirstily along the dry and dusty ways of life. — *Killo*. The anointed of the Lord. — And, therefore, a sacred person, to be treated with reverence, notwithstanding his personal unworthiness. David showed more heroism in conquering his own anger, ambition, and revenge, and in sparing Saul, than in conquering Goliath, the champion of the Philistines. — *Wordsworth*.

7. So David stayed his servants. — Literally *tore*, or *lashed*: a strong expression. — *Kirkpatrick*. "David cut down his men with words." David was obliged to hold back his men with reproving words from taking bloody vengeance on Saul. — *Erdmann*.

8. David . . . cried after Saul. — It was a bold thing to do; and one hardly knows which to admire the more, — the magnanimity that spared Saul in the cave, or the valor that braved him and his troops outside of it. — *Hanna*. Stooped, etc. — Better, *bowed himself with his face to the ground and did obeisance*. The usual Oriental gesture of reverence to a king or superior is described. — *Kirkpatrick*.

9. Men's words. — Calumniators like "Cush the Benjamite," against whom Ps. vii. is directed, strove to inflame Saul's mind against David. That Psalm has been with much probability referred to this period of his life. David's protestation of innocence in vs. 3, 4 of the Psalm is closely parallel to his words in vs. 10, 11; and his appeal to the judgment of Jehovah in vs. 8, 9 of the Psalm resembles that in v. 15. — *Kirkpatrick*.

10. The Lord had delivered thee, etc. — David expressly represents it as a divinely ordered circumstance that Saul was put into his power.

day into mine hand in the cave, and *some*¹¹ bade me kill thee: but *mine eye* spared thee; and I said, I will not put forth mine hand against my lord; for he is the Lord's anointed.

11. Moreover, my father, see, yea, see the skirt of thy robe in my hand: for in that I cut off the skirt of thy robe, and killed thee not, know thou and see that *there is* neither evil¹² nor transgression in mine hand, and I have not sinned against thee; yet thou

huntest¹³ my soul to take it.

12 The Lord judge between me and thee, and the Lord avenge me of thee: but mine hand shall not be upon thee.

13. As saith the proverb of the ancients, Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked: but mine hand shall not be upon thee.

14. After whom is the king of Is-ra-el come out? after whom dost thou pursue? after a dead dog, after a flea.

15. The Lord therefore be

¹¹ Ver. 4.

¹² Ps. 35: 7.

¹³ Chap. 26: 20.

He also expressly affirms that the temptation to kill him was presented to him ("one said," as in 23: 22), but at the same time declares that he spared him. He further gives the *reason* which deterred him from laying hand on Saul, his lord: **for he is the Lord's anointed.** — By the royal anointing, as a divine act, Saul's person was for him sacred, inviolable. — *Erdmann.*

11. **My father.** — The address of respect and affection (cp. 2 King's 5: 13; 6: 21). **Evil.** — The same word as that rendered "thy hurt" in v. 9. **My soul.** — *i. e.* my life. — *Kirkpatrick.*

12. **The Lord judge.** — After David had proved to the king in this conclusive manner that he had no reason whatever for seeking his life, he invoked the Lord as judge between him and his adversary. As Saul had no good ground for persecuting David, the latter could very calmly commit his cause to the Lord God that he might decide it as judge, and deliver him out of the hand of Saul. — *Keil.*

13. **As saith the proverb of the ancients.** — The whole verse is the proverb quoted, as is evident from the repetition of the words *my hand*, etc., the use of which in v. 12 recalled the proverb to his mind. — *Cook.* David grounds this declaration of innocence on the reference to its inner foundation and root by means of an "old proverb": **Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked;** from the evil comes evil, evil doing springs from an evil heart. — *Erdmann.* David means to say that if he had been guilty of conspiracy against the king, he would not have neglected this favorable opportunity to kill him, since men usually indulge their feelings, and from a mind guilty of conspiracy nothing but corresponding deeds could come forth. — *Clericus.*

14. **After a dead dog, after a flea.** — A term of contempt and a term of insignificance. By these terms David represents himself as one so contemptible and insignificant that it was beneath the dignity of Israel's royal monarch to pursue him. — *Terry.*

15. **Plead my cause.** — Comp. Ps. 35: 1 ff.; possibly written about this

judge, and judge between me and thee, and see¹⁴ and plead¹⁵ my cause, and deliver¹⁶ me out of thine hand.

16. And it came to pass when Da'vid had made an end of speaking these words unto Saul, that Saul said, *Is this*

thy voice, my son Da'vid ? And Saul lifted up his voice and wept.

17. And he said to Da'vid, Thou art more righteous than I; for thou hast rewarded me good,¹⁷ whereas I have rewarded thee evil.

¹⁴ 2 Chron. 24 : 22.

¹⁶ Chap. 26 : 24.

¹⁵ Ps. 35 : 1 ; 43 : 1 ; 119 : 154 ; Micah 7 : 9.

¹⁷ Matt. 5 : 44.

time. Deliver me out of thy hand. — Lit. *Judge me out of thy hand* : give me my right, and set me free. — *Kirkpatrick*.

16. Saul lifted up his voice and wept. — Saul, tossed powerless hither and thither by fierce passions, without self-control and without harmony of soul-life, is here laid hold of in a hidden corner of his heart, where he was still accessible to the power of truth, and involuntarily yields to this nobler arousing of his soul, though it is not destined to be permanent. — *Erdmann*.

17. Thou art more righteous than I. — This proves that his conscience was touched by David's words, which had so sharply contrasted innocence and baseless persecution, righteousness and unrighteousness. Saul must do honor to the truth; the overwhelming force of David's words, founded in truth, forces this confession from him; though a thorough and permanent change for the better is not thereby effected in his heart. — *Erdmann*. The confession is unwillingly extorted, the mind being nothing bettered. — *Grotius*. But we see from this of how high a degree of good Saul was capable if he had been willing to deny himself. — *Erdmann*.

ANALYSIS AND EXPOSITION.

Introduction. — After the tearful parting from his friend Jonathan, David fled to Nob, situated on an eminence near Jerusalem, then the location of the tabernacle, and the residence of a large number of priests. Ahimelech, the high priest, trembled when he saw David approaching alone, unattended even by his usual retinue. The latter quieted his fears by pretending an urgent mission from the king. He asked for bread. There being none on hand save the show-bread, which had been removed that its place might be supplied with fresh-baked loaves, Ahimelech gave this to David. This act was in violation of the ceremonial law, and is alluded to by our Lord (Matt. 12 : 3, 4) to illustrate the principle, "I will have mercy and not sacrifice." Having obtained what he sought, and taking with him the sword of Goliath, David fled to the court of Achish, King of Gath. To his astonishment and dismay he found that he was well-known there as the greatest of Israelitish warriors against the Philistines. In this emergency he feigned insanity, and the Oriental respect for insane persons procured his release (chap. 21). "David, therefore, departed thence, and escaped to the

cave of Adullam," at the foot of the Judæan hills, where he was joined by "his brethren and all his father's house." Besides these there soon appeared four hundred men, who connected themselves with him from a variety of motives. Not considering his father and mother safe even here, David conveyed them across the Jordan, and placed them under the protection of the King of Moab (22: 1-4). Other bands soon joined him. Amongst these were men of Judah and even of Saul's own tribe of Benjamin, under Amasai, son of his sister Abigail, and eleven mighty men of Gad, beyond Jordan, who swam the river in flood time, and found their way to his hold (1 Chron. 12: 8-18). With the latter, perhaps, came the prophet Gad, who is now first mentioned. He may have been sent by Samuel to counsel David by the word of the Lord. He now warned David to leave Adullam for the forest of Hareth, among the hills of Judah. His return to Judah brought him again within the knowledge of Saul, who set out in person to hunt him down. The king had begun to distrust his own immediate followers; he taunted them with having no feeling for him, and as conspiring with Jonathan on David's behalf, and sought to awaken their zeal by an appeal to tribal jealousy. Doeg, the Edomite, alone responded to this appeal. He had witnessed what took place when David visited Nob. He now poured into Saul's ear *his* version of what had occurred, and the king, filled with rage, instantly sent for Ahimelech, and all the priests of the house of Ithamar, and charged them with befriending David. Too infuriated to listen with any candor to their defense, Saul commanded their causeless murder; and when his own body-guard declined to imbrue their hands in their blood, Doeg fell upon them, and Saul witnessed the slaughter of eighty-five priests. One, and only one, — Abiathar, — fortunately not with them at the time of this massacre, escaped. From him David learned the sad tale. Thenceforward Abiathar the priest became David's companion in tribulation, and his fast friend, till the rebellion of Adonijah (22: 5-23). David now fell upon the Philistines, who were besieging Keilah, and utterly defeated them, gaining great booty from them in cattle. He established himself in that city, and thither Saul went in pursuit of him. Being warned of God, by means of the sacred ephod, that the people of Keilah would surrender him to his enemy, David left with his little band, now numbering six hundred men, and took up his quarters in the wilderness of Ziph, in the highlands of Judah, between Carmel and Juttah. Saul followed in constant search of him. The king's host came so near to David that Jonathan was able to have a personal interview with his friend, which proved the last on earth. The Ziphites betrayed David's movements to Saul, and the fugitive fled to the wilderness of Maon, beyond Jeshimon, in the extreme south. Here Saul pursued him so closely that David fled from his rock of refuge on one side of a mountain, while the king was hunting for him on its other side, and David was only saved by the arrival of a messenger who announced to Saul a sudden inroad of the

Philistines, and obliged him to discontinue the pursuit (chap. 23). The next scene in this great drama brings to view the topics of our lesson.

Lesson Topics.—I. David's Magnanimity. II. David's Appeal to Saul.

I. DAVID'S MAGNANIMITY (v. 1-8).—From the wilderness of Maon, David fled to Engedi (*Spring of the Wild Goats*). This was among the most secluded and inaccessible of those hiding-places in which David sought to elude his vigilant enemy. It was situated on the western shore of the Dead Sea, fifteen hundred feet above its level, and was a naturally fertile spot, as its ancient name, Hazezon-tamar (*Pruning or felling of the Palm*) (Gen. 14:7; 2 Chron. 20:2), would indicate. No palm-trees exist there now, but it is to be presumed when the earliest possessors came there they found the rich palm-forests; and from them they reared their villages, and called the place by the beautiful name of Hazezon-tamar, the Place of Palm Cuttings. It is of this place Dr. Robinson says: "As we came in view of the ravine, a mountain-goat started up and bounded along the face of the rocks on the opposite side. Indeed, we were now in 'the wilderness of Engedi,' where David and his men lived among 'the rocks of the wild-goats,' and where the former cut off the skirt of Saul's robe in a cave. The whole scene is drawn to the life. On all sides the country is full of caverns, which might thus serve as lurking-places for David and his men, as they do for outlaws at the present day." Amidst those wild but beautiful solitudes—these hills, "a refuge for the wild-goat"—David found a shelter, and here the outlawed poet and warrior gave to all the ages that example of magnanimity and greatness of soul which many are so ready to forget or ignore, while they are quick to remember and quote his sins.

Hither, to his retreat by the fountain of the wild-goat, the panic of the Philistine invasion being over, came Saul, "the deceitful and unjust man," against whom he had called on God "to plead his cause." The king was accompanied by three thousand men, chosen out of all Israel, and was fully bent on David's death. On one occasion it happened that Saul went alone into a cave where David and his men, seeing but not seen, were hidden in the lateral caverns. Suppose Saul had found David in his power in one of those caves? David's followers were disposed to regard it as a providential opportunity to get rid of their adversary, provided in fulfilment of the divine promise (v. 4). Because God had assured David that he would deliver him from Saul, they think David has a warrant for his destruction, and because the king is providentially in his power, they conclude that David may lawfully kill him. This was not unnatural; our interpretations of Providence as well as our conclusions in theology are apt to take the direction of our own comfort and our desires. But it was altogether wrong; and we need to exercise the greatest care lest our predilections mislead us. David refused to take the view advanced by his companions, and declined

to injure Saul. They doubtless urged the implacability of the foe who was now in his power, and argued that his own preservation demanded the course they suggested. But David contented himself with cutting off the skirt of the royal robe, and even for this his heart smote him. "And he said unto his men, The Lord forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the Lord's anointed, to stretch forth my hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the Lord." He neither touched him nor permitted his servants to do so. "Self-preservation is the first law of nature," but it is not the first law of God, who is above nature. We may not in anywise transgress God's law in seeking our own safety. "Saul rose up out of the cave and went on his way."

In this act of magnanimity the real greatness of David's spirit is displayed as clearly as in any of his long and busy life. How rare are the men who, even with all the light and help of Christianity, are equal to such acts? There is nothing that exhibits the moral grandeur of the Christian spirit more than a forgiving temper in the face of unprovoked injuries. Under malevolent treatment the spirit of the world is bitter and vindictive. It ascribes a lack of manly spirit to him who will not seek revenge for wrong done him. Even when education, conscience, public opinion, or the supremacy of law restrain men from avenging their wrongs, how often do they allow those wrongs to awaken in their hearts implacable hatred toward the authors of them? Were the restraint removed, and opportunity afforded, their causeless injuries would be visited with speedy and terrible retribution. Not unfrequently they have been, and we have seen the result. Individuals have waited and watched for years for an opportunity to "get even" with those who have done them injury; and when it came they have seized it as the tiger pounces on his prey, and inflicted injury in return. Too well have they succeeded in "getting even" with the cause of their unprovoked injury. They are now on a moral level with him, — judged by the standard of true greatness, not a whit less mean and miserable and wicked. "A man hurts himself," said Epictetus, "by injuring me; what, then, shall I therefore hurt myself by injuring him?" "In benefits," said Seneca, "it is a disgrace to be outdone; or in injuries to get the better." The ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which, according to the testimony of inspiration itself, is in the sight of God of great price, is also the imperative condition of peace of mind. Anger and revenge are uneasy and troublesome passions, they darken with clouds, and deform with tempestuous convulsions, all the regions of the inner man. The command to love our enemies, which has been thought a hard saying, and impossible to be fulfilled, is really no more, when resolved into its first principles, than bidding us to be at peace with ourselves; which we cannot be, so long as we are at enmity with others.

The Word of God is clear in its injunction concerning this matter. It not only forbids us to render evil for evil, but re-

quires us to overcome evil with good, and to exercise toward enemies a loving and forgiving spirit. "Recompense to no man evil for evil, but overcome evil with good. Avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath. Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you." These are the laws of Christ's kingdom. Such importance does our Lord attach to these and similar commands that he has made obedience the condition of obtaining forgiveness of our Heavenly Father. "If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." And in the prayer which he gave as a model to his disciples we find this awful petition, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." He requires us when we pray for forgiveness from God to give a solemn bond that we will forgive others as we pray to be forgiven.

Of just this high duty David in the cave of Engedi furnishes a striking example. This is a case where examples are peculiarly valuable. For men are constantly declaring that such high morality—morality so utterly at variance with the maxims, spirit, and usages of the world—is not attainable by them. David attained and illustrated it not only on this, but also on a later occasion into which exactly similar elements entered (26: 5-25). Other examples of such a spirit are not wanting. The persecuted apostle to the Gentiles could truthfully say for himself and his suffering brethren, "Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat" (1 Cor. 4: 12, 13). Stephen, when dying under a shower of stones, which his malignant enemies poured upon him, "kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge" (Acts 7: 60). Nor are examples of this confined to the apostolic age. The dark and suffering periods of persecution abounded with them. And, much as the lack of the spirit of Christian magnanimity and forgiveness in the professed disciples of the Lord Jesus is to be deplored, I believe it has existed in the past and does now exist among them to a far greater extent than the enemies of Christianity are willing to allow. Take one example: David Brainerd, after asking forgiveness from one of whom he had spoken disrespectfully, adds, "God has given me the disposition, that if a man has done me an hundred injuries, and I, though ever so much provoked to it, have done him only one, I feel disposed and heartily willing humbly to confess my fault to him, and on my knees to ask forgiveness of him." But we have a more illustrious example than David, or Paul, or Stephen, or Brainerd. When Jesus Christ was being nailed to the cross in unutterable agony, amidst the taunts and insults of his murderers, he prayed, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do." Such examples of forbearance and forgiveness of injuries carry something touching, sublime, and God-like in them. Compared with this, the irascible and vindictive spirit of the world is abject meanness. One whose friend, smarting under

injury, asked him if he did not think it would be *manly* to avenge it, replied, "I think it would be *man-like* to avenge, and *God-like* to forgive."

II. DAVID'S APPEAL TO SAUL (vs. 9-17). — David boldly appeared as Saul left the cave, and cried after him, "My lord the king!" Saul looked back, and listened while David pleaded his own cause, and in the skirt of his robe bade the king see a proof of his unwillingness to injure him. This appeal of David to the king is tender, earnest, manly, and devout. He begins by refuting the slanders which have been rehearsed in Saul's ears (vs. 9-11). He solemnly appeals his case to Jehovah (vs. 12, 13). He suggests that he is altogether unworthy even of Saul's enmity (v. 14). And he concludes by placing his cause without reserve in the hands of Jehovah (v. 15). Even Saul was deeply moved, acknowledged the generosity and superiority of his rival, and, aware that David would one day be king, implored him to spare his posterity, which David undertook to do (vs. 16, 17). Here is an example of the way in which evil may be overcome with good. Magnanimity will often defeat and dissipate malice. He was a true philosopher who could not rest till he had removed some recent ground of umbrage and offense; and we do not wonder that his friend exclaimed, "Your kindness has overcome me; for I was first in the quarrel, and you are first in the reconciliation."

DEC. 23, 1883.]

LESSON XII.

[1 SAM. 31:1-13.]

DEATH OF SAUL AND JONATHAN.

GOLDEN TEXT. — "The wicked is driven away in his wickedness; but the righteous hath hope in his death." — Prov. 14:32.

TIME. — B.C. 1056. PLACE. — Mount Gilboa.

LESSON-TEXT AND NOTES.

1. Now¹ the Phi-lis'tines fought against Is'ra-el: and

¹ Chron. 10:1, etc.

1. **The Philistines fought against Israel.** — This verse is connected with 29:1 (comp. 28:1, 4, sq.). The participle "were fighting" [so the Heb.] presupposes the account given in 28:1, 4, and 29:1 of the preparations for the battle, and thence forms an adjectival sentence, which is to be understood thus: "When now the Philistines," etc., "the men of Israel fled," etc. Driven from the place the men of Israel took refuge in Mount Gilboa (see 28:4), and were thither followed by the Philistines and slain. — *Erdmann*. Or less probably, the mountain itself may have been the scene of battle. — *Schaff*. **Gilboa** (*bubbling fountain*), a ridge of hills rising at Jezreel, in the eastern end of the plain of

the men of Is'ra-el fled from before the Phi-lis'tines, and fell down slain in mount Gil-bo'a.²

2. And the Phi-lis'tines followed hard upon Saul and upon his sons; and the Phi-lis'tines slew Jon'a-than, and A-bin'a-dab, and Mel'chi-shu'a, Saul's sons.³

² Chap. 28 : 4.

⁴ 2 Sam. 1 : 6, etc.

3. And the battle⁴ went sore against Saul, and the archers hit him; and he was sore wounded of the archers.

4. Then⁵ said Saul unto his armor-bearer, Draw thy sword, and thrust me through there-with; lest these uncircum-cised⁶ come and thrust me through, and abuse me. But

³ Chap. 14 : 49 ; 1 Chron. 8 : 33.

⁵ Judg. 9 : 54.

⁶ Chap. 14 : 6 ; 17 : 26.

Esdraelon, and extending to the brow of the Jordan valley. The name seems to have been derived from a *well* at its northern base, half a mile from the ruins of Jezreel. The range of Gilboa extends about ten miles from west to east. The sides are bleak, white, and barren. — *Whitney*.

2. **Saul's sons.** — See 14 : 49. There is a tragic pathos in the simplicity of the account. Cp. v. 6. — *Kirkpatrick*. **Abinadab.** — Called also *Ishni*, chap. 14 : 49. — *Benson*. The names here agree with 1 Chr. 8 : 33 ; 10 : 2. — *Cook*. When Saul and his sons saw the people flying they probably placed themselves in the thickest of the battle, and sought, as by the last efforts of despair, to turn the tide of the Philistines' victory. Thus they exposed themselves to death. — *Terry*.

3. **The battle went sore against Saul.** — Cp. 1 Kings 22 : 31 ff. The Vulgate has a striking paraphrase : "The whole weight of the battle was directed against Saul." — *Kirkpatrick*. After his sons had fallen, Saul was in worse straits than ever, for now the brunt of the battle came on him. — *Terry*. **He was sore wounded.** — Better, "*he was sore afraid*," as the sense of the word is Deut. 2 : 25, there rendered *to be in anguish*. Saul's fear is explained in v. 4. — *Cook*. He "trembled, was frightened," *at the archers*, because, the battle going hard against him, he saw no way of escaping them, or of resisting the enemy's superior force, especially as, since the death of his sons, he was alone with his armor-bearer. And even if we suppose that it was not *despairing fear* that he felt (which, however, after the scene at Endor (chap. 28), might well get control of him, notwithstanding his old heroism of character), but only *failure of resources*, yet his fear and trembling at the shame that threatened him (v. 4) may be easily explained. — *Erdmann*.

4. **Unto his armor-bearer.** — See 16 : 21. Had David continued in this office he would probably have perished in this battle. But God had put him in a place of safety, though it seemed one of great peril. — *Cook*. **These uncircumcised.** — No indignity could be more intolerable than for the sacred person of Jehovah's anointed to be the butt of the heathen, who had no part of his covenant. Cp. 14 : 6. **Abuse me.** — Mal-treat me for their own amusement. — *Kirkpatrick*. **His armor-bearer would not; for he was sore afraid.** — He had, indeed, to defend the king's life, and was responsible for its preservation. — *Erdmann*. **Saul took a sword.** — Rather, *took the sword*, that is, the sword of the armor-bearer just referred to. **Fell upon it.** — Thrust it through himself by

his armor-bearer would not, for he was sore afraid. Therefore Saul took a sword and fell upon it.

5. And when his armor-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he fell likewise upon his sword, and died with him.

6. So Saul died,⁷ and his three sons, and his armor-

bearer, and all his men, that same day together.

7. And when the men of Is'ra-el that *were* on the other side of the valley, and *they* that *were* on the other side of Jor'dan saw that the men of Is'ra-el fled, and that Saul and his sons were dead, they forsook the cities and fled; and

⁷ Chap. 28 : 19.

falling over upon it. This account of Saul's death is every way consistent with itself and with Saul's character, and is to be regarded as the true and authentic record of the sacred historian himself. The story of the Amalekite who stole the king's crown and bracelet, and brought them to David (2 Sam. 1 : 4-10), is to be treated as a fabrication, feigned with the hope of finding favor with the successor of Saul. — *Terry*.

5. **And died with him.** — Being answerable for the king's life, he feared punishment; or from a nobler motive of true fidelity, refused to survive his master. — *Kirkpatrick*. Touching and beautiful was this devotion of the faithful armor-bearer to his king. It not only evidences the deep attachment of a true and tender heart, but also shows that Saul was not without strong personal magnetism, which drew others to him, and kept them firmly there. At his public election at Mizpeh there claved to Saul a number of men whose hearts were touched by God (10 : 26), and at no time during his reign did he want for attendants who were thus tenderly attached to his person and interests. — *Terry*.

6. **All his men.** — 1 Chron. 10 : 6 has "all his house" instead of "all his men." Certainly Abner, who was no doubt in the battle, had not fallen, 2 Sam. 11 : 8 ; but that is not inconsistent with the statement, since he, as Saul's general (11 : 50 *sq.*) belonged, strictly speaking, neither to the "house" nor to the "men," by which term we must understand the soldiers who were near the king's person, his body-guard, as it were. — *Erdmann*.

7. **On the other side of the valley.** — This must mean to the north of the plain of Jezreel, and would comprise the tribe of Naphtali, and Zabulon, and probably Issacher. But the text of 1 Chron. 10 : 7 has "that were in the valley," limiting the statement to the inhabitants of the plain of Jezreel. — *Cook*. **On the other side Jordan.** — This is the usual sense of the Hebrew words. The panic spread even to the eastern side of the Jordan. But possibly the phrase here means "on the side of the Jordan," i.e. in the district between the battle-field and the river; which agrees better with the account of the exploit of the Jabeshites and the establishment of Ishbosheth's kingdom at Mahanaim. The greater part of the north of Canaan was thus occupied by the Philistines. — *Kirkpatrick*. **The Philistines . . . dwelt in them.** — One of the principal cities, Beth-shan, fell into their power at once, v. 10. — *Cook*.

the Phi-lis'tines came and dwelt in them.

8. And it came to pass on the morrow, when the Phi-lis'tines came to strip the slain, that they found Saul and his three sons fallen in mount Gil-bo'a.

9. And they cut off his head,

* Chap. 21: 9.

9 2 Sam. 21: 12.

and stripped off his armor, and sent into the land of the Phi-lis'tines round about, to publish it in the house of their idols, and among the people.

10. And⁸ they put his armor in the house of Ash'ta-roth,⁹ and they fastened his body¹⁰ to the wall of Beth'shan.

¹⁰ Josh. 17: 11; Judg. 1: 27.

8. And it came to pass on the morrow. — On the day after the battle, which had therefore probably lasted till evening, the darkness preventing plundering. On Mount Gilboa they found Saul and his sons fallen (comp. v. 1), the Israelitish army, and with it Saul and his sons, having fallen back thither from the plain before the victorious Philistines. — *Erdmann.*

9. They cut off his head. — The anointed of Jehovah fares no better than the uncircumcised Goliath, now that God has forsaken him. To publish it. — To publish the good news. Cp. 2 Sam. 1: 20. In the house of their idols. — In the temples of their idols, which were regarded as the givers of the victory. Cp. ch. 5: 2. Chronicles reads: "To carry tidings to their idols." — *Kirkpatrick.*

10. They put his armor, etc. — In the Chronicles (1 Chr. 10: 10) it is said generally in the house of their gods, but here specifically in the house of Ashtaroth. This was doubtless the famous temple of Venus in Askelon mentioned by Herodotus (i. 105) as the most ancient of all her temples. Hence the special mention of Askelon, 2 Sam. 1: 20. The placing Saul's armor as a trophy in the temple of Ashtaroth was a counterpart to placing of Goliath's sword in the tabernacle, 21: 9; 17: 54. In 1 Chron. 10: 10, it is added that they "fastened Saul's head in the temple of Dagon," probably either in Gaza (Judg. 16: 21, 23), or in Ashdod (1 Sam. 5: 2, 3). This was, perhaps, in retaliation for the similar treatment of Goliath's head (1 Sam. 17: 54). — *Cook.* They fastened his body. — Together with the bodies of his sons (v. 12). They were hung on the wall in the "open place" (2 Sam. 21: 12, E. V. street) by the gate, that all the passers-by might join in exulting over the defeat and disgrace of Israel. — *Kirkpatrick.* Beth-shan. — House of rest; the halting-place for caravans from Syria, or Midian, to Egypt, and the emporium for the commerce of these countries. It afterwards was called in the Greek Scythopolis, and is identified with the modern Beisan, at the east end of the plain of Esdraelon, five miles west of the Jordan. — *Terry.*

11. The inhabitants of Jabesh-Gilead. — Mindful of the debt of gratitude they owed to Saul for rescuing them from Nahash (ch. 11). The isolated round-topped hill on the south side of the Wady Yabis, which has been conjecturally fixed upon as the site of Jabesh, is in full view of Beth-shan (Tristram, *Land of Israel*, p. 556). The distance over the hills, down into the Jordan valley, and up the Wady Jald is not much under twenty miles. — *Kirkpatrick.* This is a touching and rare example of national gratitude. — *Cook.*

11. And when the inhabitants of Ja'besh-gil'e-ad¹¹ heard of that which the Philis'tines had done to Saul:

12. All the valiant men arose, and went all night, and took the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons from the

wall of Beth'shan, and came to Ja'besh, and burnt¹² them there.

13. And they took their bones, and buried¹³ them under a tree at Ja'besh, and fasted¹⁴ seven days.

¹¹ Chap. 11 : 1-11.

¹² 2 Chron. 16 : 14 ; Jer. 34 : 5 ; Amos 6 : 10.

¹³ 2 Sam. 2 : 4, 5 ; 21 : 12-14.

¹⁴ Gen. 50 : 10.

12. **And burnt them there.** — Burning was not the usual mode of sepulture among the Hebrews. But in this case, from a pious desire to disguise the mutilation of the headless corpses, and exempt them from any possible future insult, the men of Jabesh burnt the bodies, yet so as to preserve the bones (v. 13 ; 2 Sam. 21 : 12). — *Cook*.

13. **Under a tree.** — *Under the tamarisk*, some well-known tree at Jabesh. David removed the bones to the family sepulchre at Zelah (2 Sam. 21 : 12-14). **Fasted seven days.** — A sign of general mourning. Cp. 2 Sam. 1 : 12 ; 3 : 35, etc. — *Kirkpatrick*.

ANALYSIS AND EXPOSITION.

Introduction. — About this time the whole land of Israel was afflicted by the death of the venerable prophet Samuel. He was committed to the grave in his house at Ramah, amidst the lamentation of the entire nation (25:1). David must have felt his loss most severely, but he did not allow it to interfere with the steps which were necessary in order that he should not fall into the hands of Saul. "And David arose and went down to the wilderness of Paran." In the town of Maon, a few miles south of Hebron, there dwelt a rich but churlish shepherd named Nabal, whose possessions extended into Carmel, a village about one mile north of Maon, not to be confounded with the mountain of that name on the shore of the Mediterranean. To this man David and his followers had rendered valuable service. Hearing that Nabal was about to shear his sheep, an occasion of much festivity, David sent ten men to request some supplies. Nabal flatly and insultingly refused, and David would have inflicted summary vengeance had it not been for the interposition of Nabal's wife Abigail. Having heard of her husband's uncivil conduct, she came forth with a plentiful supply of provisions to meet David, and turned away his wrath, frankly avowing that as for her husband "Nabal (*fool*) is his name, and folly is with him." Returning home she found her husband drinking to excess at the feast. Next morning she informed him of the risk he had run, on which he was stricken with apoplexy, and in ten days he died. Thereupon David married Abigail, and besides espoused Ahinoam of Jezreel, in Southern Judah (25:2-44).

David is found again in the wilderness of Ziph. His old

enemies, the Ziphites, betray him once more, and Saul again leads an army, under Abner, against him. With Abishai, his nephew, David penetrated through the lines in the dead of night to the spot where the king lay, his spear stuck in the ground at his bolster. Again comes the suggestion to take advantage of the opportunity. But David contented himself with taking Saul's spear, and the cruse of water at his bolster. With these he ascended a neighboring hill and taunted Abner, whom he had aroused, with his lack of vigilance. Soon Saul also was awakened, recognized David's voice, and acknowledged with admiration his rival's magnanimity. He and David never met again (chap. 26).

Convinced that Saul was not to be trusted, and despairing of safety within his reach, David resolved finally to seek shelter among the Philistines, and at the head of his six hundred followers presented himself before Achish, the King of Gath. The Philistine king assigned him the town of Ziklag for his abode, and here David dwelt for sixteen months, and led successful expeditions against the neighboring tribes. Before long the Philistines gathered together all their forces for another struggle with the Israelites, and Achish took David and his troop with him as a part of the army; but the other lords refused to let him remain with them, and insisted on his immediate return. Thus was he relieved from what must have been a situation of great embarrassment. When he got back to Ziklag, he found that it had been sacked by the Amalekites, and burnt with fire; and that his wives and all his property had been carried away. After ascertaining the Divine will, David pursued them, defeated them with great slaughter, and captured enormous spoils, which he divided among his followers and many friendly towns which had aided him during his wanderings (chap. 27; 28:1, 2; 29; 30).

Lesson Topics.—I. The Mountain Fight. II. The Mighty Fallen.

I. THE MOUNTAIN FIGHT (vs. 1-7).—In the meantime the crisis of Saul's fate was rapidly approaching. The Philistines pressed on in dense array toward the plain of Jezreel, and pitched by Shunness, on the southern slope of the range of Little Hermon, while Saul encamped his forces on the opposite range of Mount Gilboa. As he beheld his foes passing on by hundreds and thousands he was filled with the utmost alarm. He greatly wished to obtain supernatural direction and advice. This privilege legitimately belonged to his office; but Samuel was dead; Abiathar the high priest was with David, and his sin had shut him out from access to God. In this terrible crisis he sought the desired aid through a forbidden medium, and though at the beginning of his reign he had rigidly enforced the Mosaic laws against diviners and wizards, and cut off many of them from the land, he now earnestly seeks for one of these as his only resource. Obtaining the requisite information, and disguising himself, he set out with two attendants, under cover

of the night, for a dark and gloomy cavern at Endor, about seven or eight miles distant. Crossing a shoulder of the very ridge where the Philistines were intrenched, they reached the cave, and Saul informed the woman of his desire to have an interview with the prophet Samuel. To the astonishment and terror of the sorceress Samuel did appear, sent by God to inform the king that the day of doom was at hand. "To-morrow," said he, "shalt thou and thy sons be with me." Utterly prostrated by this awful announcement, "Saul fell straightway all along on the earth and was sore afraid." Having with difficulty been persuaded to take food, he rose up, and recrossing the ridge, reached the heights of Gilboa (28: 3-25).

The next morning broke, and the Philistines made their attack. The unhappy king was but ill-prepared, by the fatigue and excitement of the night, and the consciousness of doom which oppressed him, for the fierce battle. His army was soon routed, and as it fled before the enemy large numbers were slain upon the heights. The skilful archers of the Philistines pursued hard after Saul and his sons; three of the latter were slain, including the valiant Jonathan. Saul himself was wounded, and when his armor-bearer refused to kill him, fell upon his own sword and expired. The rout was complete. On the next day the Philistines found the bodies of Saul and his three sons among the dead, and messengers were instantly despatched through all the cities of Philistia to command rejoicings in the idol temple. Saul's head was struck from his body, and placed in the temple of Dagon, probably at Ashdod, while the headless trunk, with those of his three sons, they fastened to the wall of the city of Bethshan. On the east of Jordan, and in full view of Bethshan, was the town of Jabesh-Gilead, which Saul had relieved in the early part of his reign. Mindful of this the men of this town made a night march across the river and took down the bodies of Saul and his sons, which they carried to Jabesh-Gilead and burnt. The news of this disastrous battle was brought to David at Ziklag by an Amalekite, who brought with him Saul's crown and bracelet and pretended to have slain him at his own request. He expected a reward from David for such services, but he was greatly mistaken in his man. David ordered his young men to put him to death on the spot. Then David took his harp, and, forgetting all Saul's enmity, he poured forth a strain of passionate lamentation over Saul, while toward Jonathan his whole soul gushed out in expressions of tenderest affection.

II. THE MIGHTY FALLEN.—The commencement of Saul's career was full of promise. His future looked bright and hopeful. In form and person he was noble and manly. He was chosen of God to be Israel's first king. He was anointed and advised by the excellent Samuel, who loved him with a great affection, and he entered upon his reign with the good-will of his people and the favor of his God. But his pathway was darkened by disobedience. He exalted his own authority above that of Jehovah, and he was rejected. He wandered farther

and farther from the path of integrity. His days became embittered by the most deadly envy and jealousy, and he fell a prey to wretchedness and melancholy. His end was awful. There is just one practical lesson more important and comprehensive than any other to be drawn from his career, namely: God gives to every man a kingdom; if, like Saul, he fail to rise to its responsibilities it will be taken from him.

“So ends the history of Saul. But we may not pass from it without staying for a moment to point the lesson which it so impressively teaches. It may be given in the words of David himself, at a later date, to Solomon, his son: ‘Serve God with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind: for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts; if thou seek him, he will be found of thee: but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off forever.’ Some may think, indeed, that, in the record of David’s history, we have come upon blacker spots than any which we have found in the biography of Saul. And no doubt, as Archbishop Trench has said, ‘He was clear of offences which make some pages of David’s history nothing better than one huge blot.’ But then David knew that he had sinned, and turned from his iniquity in penitent confession unto God. Now we look in vain for anything like this in Saul. If, on any occasion, he seems to use the words of regret, they are merely superficial, and come not from the depths of his soul. He cared more for being honored before the people than for being accepted by the Lord; and even in this last climax of his misery, his concern is not that God may forgive him, but merely that he may vanquish his enemies in battle. In view of all this, we are almost tempted to exclaim, with the eminent prelate from whom I have already quoted, ‘How much better it would have been to have sinned like David, if only he had repented like David; if a temper resembling at all the temper which dictated the fifty-first Psalm had found place in him. But all this was far from him. Darkness is closing round him; anguish has taken hold of him; but the broken and the contrite heart, there is no remotest sign of this; no reaching out after the blood of sprinkling. We listen, but no voice is heard like His who exclaimed, ‘Purge me with hysop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow;’ but dark, defiant, and unbelieving, he who had inspired such high hopes goes forward to meet his doom. Surely from such a history as that we may well rise with the prayer upon our lips, ‘Oh, for the broken and the contrite heart, which God will not despise.’ David’s sins sent him weeping to the mercy-seat. Saul’s sins sent him defiant and unbending, to the cave of Endor: there is the root of the difference between the two.” — *Wm. M. Taylor, D.D.*

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